

Proto Buddhism - The Original Teachings of the Buddha

By Venerable Dr. Madawela Punnaji Nayaka Maha Thera

<http://buddhaoriginalteachings.blogspot.com/p/protobuddhism.html>

[Home](#)

Venerable Dr. Madawela Punnaji Maha Thera, a Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka, has spent more than sixty years of research, to discover the original teachings of the Buddha, by making an in-depth intensive study of both the theory as well as the practice of Buddhism.

Venerable Punnaji discovered that the original teachings were found in the Pali Nikayas preserved by the Theravadins, though not fully understood by them. Modern scholars were unable to get at the original teachings because they focused their attention on a later interpretation of the teachings called the Abhidharma and commentaries. There were several commentaries written by different schools of thought during the time of Emperor Asoka. What is today popular among the Theravada school is a collection of commentaries made by the Theravada school called Vibhajjavāda. Even reading the Theravada Suttas by learning Pali, the scriptural language, is not necessarily successful. This is because the interpretation of the Pali language itself is based on the later commentaries, which sometimes can be quite misleading. Moreover, the translations of the scriptures by Western scholars have introduced many interpretational errors due to language difficulties.

It takes a highly critical and intellectual person, with an excellent command of both Pali as well the English language, and who has a background of modern philosophy, modern psychology, and modern science as well as having tested and experienced advanced states of meditation to translate into English the deeper and profound teachings of the Buddha. The author certainly is very well equipped for this task. Venerable Punnaji is well versed in Western fields of scientific knowledge, including medicine, and has a thorough understanding of comparative religions, modern philosophy and psychology. His interpretations of the original teachings of the Buddha have been much enriched by these forays beyond a mere study and practice of Buddhism. No modern scholar has so far taken the time and energy necessary to be able to identify the elusive original teachings of the Buddha.

His mission has been to disseminate his findings through publications, sermons, workshops, conference presentations, Internet postings, and meditation retreats to a world- wide audience. He is well known for his clear and accurate presentation of Buddhism and has grateful students the world over.

The three booklets – Ariyamagga Bhāvanā I, II, and III – is an effort to gradually introduce the essence of Buddhist meditation. It is both logical and comprehensive. A careful study of the contents will also expose the reader to many unknown or misunderstood teachings of the Buddha. This booklet also reveals how the Buddha solved the problem of existence, and how a serious practitioner could Awaken from the Dream of Existence – Nibbāna.

Venerable Mahathera M. Punnaji is a Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka of the Theravada tradition. Bhante is a disciple of His Holiness The Madihe Pannasiha, the late Maha Nayaka Thera of Vajirarama, Head of the Mihiripanne Dhammarakkhita Amarapura Nikaya. Bhante Punnaji was ordained at the Bhikkhu Training Centre, Maharagama, in his thirties. He obtained his training in meditation at the Island Hermitage, Dodanduwa.

In 1971 Ven. Punnaji was sent by his preceptor, the Most Ven. Madihe Paññasiha, to the newly started Washington Buddhist Vihara, the only Sri Lankan Vihara in America at that time. In 1977 he was invited to Boston and became the president of the Triple Gem society, where he taught yoga and meditation to Americans and conducted a research in Buddhist psychology and psychotherapy, in association with the Boston University and Harvard University. In 1980 he conducted a course in Buddhist philosophy in the University of Vermont, at the Living and Learning Centre. In 1981 he was invited to Canada to be the Abbot of the Toronto Maha Vihara. In 1974 he was invited by Mr. R. Premadasa (who later became the President of Sri Lanka) to be the director of the Mihindu Sarasaviya, a Buddhist Research Institute in Mihintale Sri Lanka. In 1977 he was invited to the Fo Kuan Shan Monastic University in Taiwan as a Professor of Buddhism. Since then he has been living in retirement in North America teaching meditation, Buddhist philosophy and psychology.

He studied modern science and Western medicine in Sri Lanka and he obtained two doctorates while in the United States, one is Western psychology and another in Western philosophy and comparative religion. Bhante Punnaji has made an in-depth research into the original teachings of the Buddha which he thinks is different from all the modern schools of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana including Zen and Pure- land Buddhism. This research was not only academic but also experiential. Bhante also did research into the form of Buddhist Psychotherapy which he thinks is the best way to introduce Buddhism to the modern world. As Buddhism in its original form was not a mere religion of faith and worship but a psychological technique of growth and evolution of the human consciousness.

Bhante Punnaji presents Buddhism as a growth technique that transforms an individual's disposition by changing a person's sense of values and goal in life while it also overcomes the stress and strain of modern living. Bhante points out that the teaching of the Buddha is about a conscious return to the original equilibrium which the normal person loses in childhood due to unconscious emotional impulses. This return to the original equilibrium called NIBBANA is achieved through a psychological technique of conscious evolution of the human consciousness where the human being goes through a paradigm shift and thereby transcends all human weakness and enters a superhuman "divine" state which all religions worship as "God". This means that Buddhism is a humanistic philosophy that recognizes the unity in all religions and defines "religion", "God" and "divinity" from a humanistic point of view. This also means that the Buddha has brought a saving message of hope to the world by introducing a very optimistic philosophy that guarantees a freedom from all human weakness and suffering by means of a conscious human psychological techniques of growth and evolution of the human mind which brings results here and now.

Bhante Punnaji has many students in the United States, Canada and Europe who had benefitted from his teachings and who express their appreciation by speaking about the immense change in their lives for the better. Bhante is well known for his clear, accurate and original presentation of Buddhism and has grateful students the world over/in many parts of the world.

Bhante Punnaji is well-versed in Western fields of scientific knowledge including medicine and has a thorough understanding of comparative religions, philosophy and psychology. Bhante's interpretations of the original teachings of the Buddha have been much enriched by these forays beyond a mere study and practice of Buddhism.

Bhante has played a significant role in the dissemination of Buddhism in the West and is well known to Buddhist in Canada, United States and abroad. Sought by many as a resourceful spiritual guide, Bhante Punnaji shares his time between the Buddhist centres in Canada, United States, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and other countries.

Early Life

Born Pushpananda Madawela on November 26, 1929, in Sri Lanka, Reverend Punnaji started meditating when he was five years old. As he grew up in Sri Lanka, he began getting interested in Buddhism while other children were starting school. He wanted to become a monk when he was seven, and knew he would become one when he was 17.

Growing up in Sri Lanka under his mother's religious upbringing, Reverend Punnaji became interested in Buddhism at an age when children were just starting school. However, due to his parents' wishes for him to do well academically and also his interest in science, Reverend Punnaji studied medicine and eventually became a general practitioner.

After a decade in practice, the deeply religious medical officer decided to hang up his coat and put on a saffron robe, passing all his belongings to his sister in the process. He was a doctor for 10 years when he decided to renounce all things worldly in life to become a monk at the age of 38.

He attributed the decision to his mother's influence, the monks he met and the Buddhist teachings he read.

"After I renounced everything, I came out of hell. Everyday life is full of suffering and unhappiness. As a monk, I don't experience these."

"It's something a layperson will find hard to understand," he says.

When he retreated to a meditation centre in a forest once, his friend visited him and asked why he wanted to suffer in such a place.

"I told him I was having the happiest time of my life. He couldn't understand.

"Meditation allows one to give up sensual pleasures, purify the mind and experience true happiness," says Punnaji.

Today, the senior resident monk in the Maha Vihara Temple in Brickfields is in charge of training young monks. He plans to teach them ways to examine Buddhism from a scientific view.

"Buddhism, in its original form, is not at all opposed to science.

"There's a correlation between scientific thinking, western psychology and Buddhism.

"I can show that the teachings of Buddha can be spoken in modern terms, not only mythical."

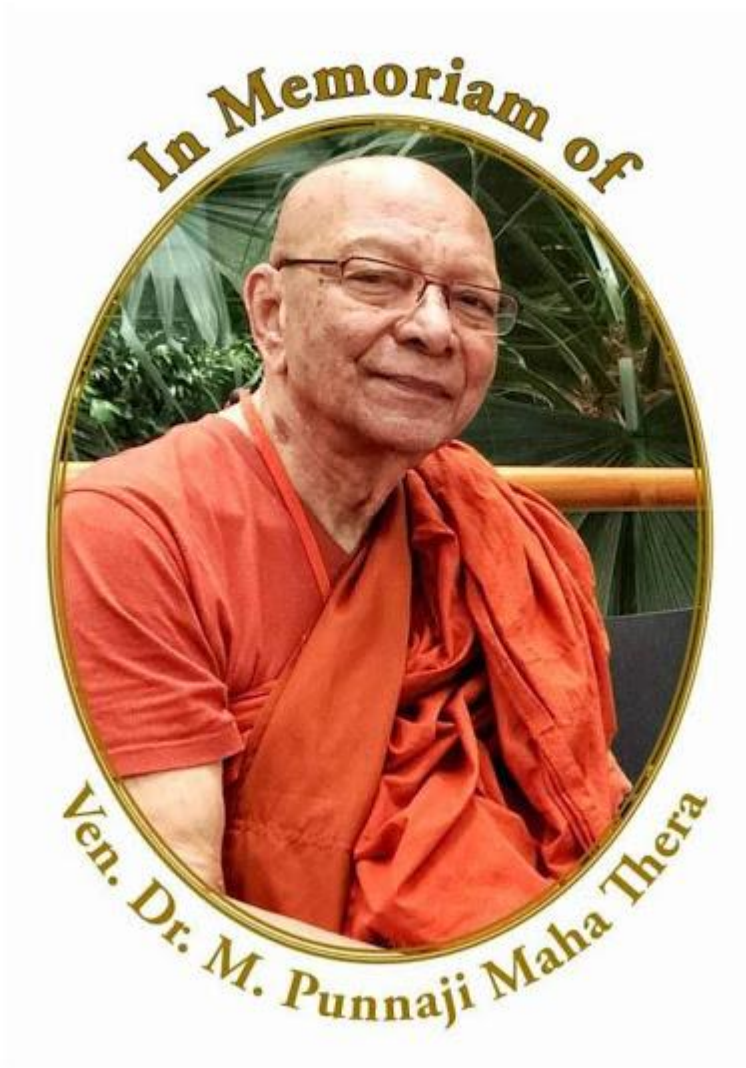
Discover the original teachings of the Buddha by Ven. Dr Bhante Mahathera Punnaji, please visit

<http://www.protobuddhism.com>

<http://www.bhantepunnaji.com>
<http://buddhaoriginalteachings.blogspot.com/p/protobuddhism.html>

In Memoriam

Anicca Vatha Sankhara. The Buddhist Maha Vihara is deeply saddened to report that the Late Ven. Dr M Punnaji passed away very peacefully in the morning of 27th July 2018, in Sri Lanka. His remains now lies at his temple at Vajiraramaya, Primrose Road, Kandy, Sri Lanka. The funeral service will be held on Monday 30th July at 1 pm. At the request left behind by the late Venerable, his entire remains will be donated to the medical services at 4 pm of the same day. May Venerable Punnaji attain the highest bliss of Nibbāna soonest.



[Source](#)

Remembering Bhante Madawela Punnaji

By Ven. Dr. Walpola Piyananda, Maha Nayaka Thera

I personally and all who knew him were saddened to hear of the passing of our Venerable Dr. Madawela Punnaji. Venerable Dr. Madawela Punnaji

He made a lasting impression on everyone he met. He certainly was not the average Sri Lankan Theravadan monk, who becomes a novice in his teens or pre-teens and then has his entire education and life dedicated towards practicing as a Buddhist monk, which he continued until his death at age 89, when he passed away with his mind and his voice as sharp and as clear as ever.

Bhante Punnaji was highly educated in both Western science and Buddhism. He was in fact a practicing physician for many years before deciding to dedicate himself to a life as a Buddhist monk.

He became one of the foremost meditation teachers in all of Buddhism. He was an iconoclast – indeed, many traditional Sri Lankan Buddhists and even Buddhist monks were sometime uncomfortable with his teachings -- but he backed up everything he said with his own experience and his research.

He was totally dedicated to the truth, and he found that truth in Buddhism. He was quite taken with Western Psychology and the relationship between psychology and Buddhism was an ongoing theme for him. He wrote countless articles and books on these subjects while maintaining a steady schedule of meditation classes and retreats.

Bhante Punnaji traveled extensively until his last years, rarely staying in one place too long. Fortunately, one place he came back to time and again, starting from its founding in 1980, was Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara. He wrote many of his articles here with the assistance of some of our Western disciples. He conducted retreats, taught some yoga, and continued his own research throughout his life.

Yes, Bhante Punnaji was his own man: he wasn't afraid to express ideas that ran counter to traditional thinking, but it was always supported by his vast knowledge, and never did he do anything to bring Buddhism or the Sangha into disrepute. While I personally did not always agree with his ideas, I realized the importance of the discussion he brought up. And there is no denying that many of the Western disciples as well as Asian Buddhists who practiced meditation with him felt he was the best meditation teacher they had ever encountered.

He left a fairly extensive body of writing, books and articles, which are timeless and which will be sure to influence future generations of meditators. Many will miss that twinkle in your eye.

Thanks for all your years of service to Buddhism and to mankind.

These are the words of Gautama the Buddha upon enlightenment:

Anicca vata sankhara, uppavaya-dhammino

Impermanence is the nature of all conditioned phenomenon. They arise and pass away, again and again, with great rapidity.

Uppajjitva nirujjhanti, (2 times)

tesam vupasamo sukho.

When past sensations arise and are met with awareness/equanimity, their cessation brings true happiness.

Aneka-jati samsaram

sandhavissam anibbisam,

Through countless births in the cycle of existence

I have run, in vain

Gahakarakam gavesanto

dukkha-jati-punappunam.

seeking the builder of this house; and again and again I faced the discomfort of new birth.

Gahakaraka! Dithosi,

puna geham na kahasi.

Oh housebuilder! Now you are seen.

You shall not build a house again for me.

Sabba te phasuka bhagga,

gahakutam visankhitam.

All your beams are broken, the ridgepole is shattered.

Visankhara-gatam cittam,

tanhanam khayamajjhaga.

The mind has become freed from conditioning; the end of craving has been reached.

Sabbe sankhara anicca'ti.

yada pannaya passati,

Impermanent are all compounded things, when one perceives this with insight.

Atha nibbindati dukkhe.

esa maggo visuddhiya.

then one turns away from suffering; this is the path of purification.

Sabbesu cakkavajesu

yakkha deva ca brahmano,

May the holy entities of all the universes

Yam amhehi katam punnam,

sabba sampatti sadhikam.

rejoice in this wholesome meditation process performed by us, which is productive of all happiness.

Sabbe tam anumoditva,

samagga sasane rata,

May they all, unitedly devoted to the teaching

pamada rahita hontu

arakkhasu visesato.

be without negligence, especially in giving protection.

Punna bhagamidam c'annam,

samam dadama karitam.

We share with all equally the merit of this meditation and other wholesome deeds.

Anumodantu tam sabbe,

medini thatu sakkhike.

May they all accept with joy our sharing, and may the earth stand witness to it!

Bhavatu sabbe mangalam (3 times)

May all beings be happy

[Source](#)

STORY OF BUDDHA & CONCEPT OF GOD in ARIYA MAGGA III below

PSYCHOTHERAPY A Buddhist Perspective of Modern Psychotherapy & Evolution of Consciousness

Western interest in Buddhism has a history of a little more than three centuries. It is only quite recently, however, that the Western intellect has begun to dig deep into the profound teachings of the Buddha. Modern psychologists who have experimented with Buddhist meditation have begun to notice a close parallelism as well as a few discrepancies between modern psychological thinking and the teachings of the Buddha. This paper is the result of a long research to discover the relation between early Buddhism and modern psychotherapeutic theory and practice, with the hope that it might open vistas of knowledge that lay hidden under the ashes of by gone centuries. This study has also thrown some valuable insights into the mysteries of the human mind that have puzzled many a great scientist of the modern age. An important consequence of this research was the discovery of the intrinsic psychotherapeutic value of early Buddhism, as distinct from the many varieties of Buddhism available in the spiritual supermarket today.

[Buddhism Then and Now](#)

Buddhism then and now

It is popularly thought today that Buddhism is a religion containing numerous myths, traditions and mystical practices. On a close examination of the original teachings of the Buddha, we begin to recognize the error in this popular view. It is therefore extremely necessary to avoid confusing modern Buddhism, as it is practiced in different cultures today, with what was taught and practiced by Gotama the Buddha and his disciples more than twenty-five centuries ago. What is practiced today in the three main forms of Buddhist culture, whether Theravada, Mahayana, or Vajrayana, are mainly rituals and ceremonies with symbols of worship, accompanied by emotionally held traditional dogmas. This type of Buddhism is not different from any other religion with different dogmas, rituals and symbols of worship, which serve mankind only as a placebo, in temporarily reducing the anxieties and worries of life, regarding the here and hereafter.

Buddhism originally was a practical solution to **the basic problem of human existence**, which is the insecurity of life and the resulting anxiety that underlies all our daily concerns, troubles and tribulations. It is only through a thorough examination of the early teachings of the Buddha in comparison with the beliefs and practices of modern day Buddhists, that one may recognize the distinction between original Buddhism and the modern Buddhist traditions and practices. Without adequately understanding this important distinction between early Buddhism, and the culturally oriented modern Buddhism, it would not be possible to comprehend the important psychotherapeutic basis of the teachings of the Buddha. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize at this point that whenever the term "Buddhism" is used henceforth in this paper, it is the original teachings of the Buddha that is referred to, and not to any form of modern Buddhism that is prevalent among people of any Buddhist culture today.

[How This Paper is Written](#)

How this paper is written

The research findings presented in this paper are in response to the urgent need to come up with a successful psychotherapy, based on the original teachings of the Buddha. The original teachings of the Buddha are found in the earliest recordings, carried by rote in the form of the Pali *Suttapitaka*. Fortunately, the Theravada⁽¹⁾ school of Buddhism seems to have preserved at least some of the original teachings, even though this school may not have paid adequate attention to them. This school laid more emphasis on the texts called the Abhidhamma, which was only an interpretation of the teachings according to a particular school, rather than the original teachings of the Buddha.

In this paper,⁽²⁾ we shall discuss at first **the basic psychological problem** experienced by all human beings, as seen by Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychotherapy. We shall then compare this with the description of the **fundamental problem of human existence** given by the Buddha. We shall also discuss the problem of existence as seen by Charles Darwin, when he formulated the theory of evolution. We shall see how these three descriptions wonderfully complement one another. Then we shall examine how Freud attempted to solve this problem, and how he lamented about the imperfections of his method. This will be followed by a description of the method used by the Buddha and the reason for its success in transforming individuals. We shall also dwell on the method adapted by the Buddha to go beyond the goal of Freud. Freud's main concern was to help his patients, suffering from abnormal conditions of health, to return to normal. The Buddha on the other hand, was interested in helping normal people to overcome their normal worries and anxieties, including the fear of death; and in doing so, he discovered a supernormal state of perfect mental health and happiness, through a process of evolution of the human consciousness. We shall also discuss this process of human evolution in relation to Darwin's biological theory of evolution, and refer the culmination of this evolutionary process in the evolution of the human consciousness to the point where the evolutionary process stops. This concern of the Buddha in transforming the normal to a "supernormal mental health" may be judged from modern standards as too farfetched. Yet an examination of the Buddha's methods and his findings may open the eyes of those who are puzzled by the psychotherapeutic problems of the modern day.

(1) Theravada is the earliest school of Buddhism known to modern historians. It is the form of Buddhism found today in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia.

(2) This research paper was developed during a period of residency, from December 2000 to August 2001, at the Hsi Lai University in Los Angeles. The author was provided a secluded environment in which to organize and present the findings of his research that had lasted more than fifty years. The author had prepared for this task by studying modern science, Eastern and Western psychology and philosophy, before making a thorough theoretical study and a practical testing of the

original teachings of the Buddha.

The Purpose of This Paper

The purpose of this paper

Research and information presented in this study is an effort to meet the urgent need for an effective Buddhist psychotherapy. A review of historical and contemporary psychotherapies revealed the need for a thorough knowledge of modern psychology and modern psychotherapy, as well as an adequate knowledge of Buddhist psychology and philosophy, before one can arrive at an appropriate psychotherapeutic technique founded on the teachings of the Buddha. It is also essential, for psychotherapists who contemplate using Buddhist psychotherapy on their clients, to find out how this knowledge can be successfully utilised in every day psychotherapeutic practice. There appears to be a lack of such systematic Buddhist psychotherapy at the present time.

Buddhist principles relevant to psychotherapy can be mainly considered under the Fourfold Sublime Reality⁽³⁾, and specifically the Sublime Eightfold Way,⁽⁴⁾ on which all Buddhist psychotherapeutic techniques have to be based. The Sublime Eightfold Way deals with the cognitive, affective and the motor phases of the reaction of an organism to sensory stimulation, and is therefore a broad based approach to psychotherapy. A unique contribution of the present research is the proposal that when the first step in the Sublime Eightfold Way, which is the Harmonious Perspective,⁽⁵⁾ is well established in a client, then the other seven steps: Harmonious-orientation, speech, action, life-style, exercise, attention, and equilibrium will automatically follow, accompanied by a complete personal transformation to a healthy, mature, and happy personality. Conversely, according to the Buddha, all psychological disorders stem from the disharmonious perspective, which is the unhealthy way one sees himself/herself in relation to the world. The Harmonious Perspective is discussed in detail to provide potential therapists with the necessary knowledge to deal with the variety of psychological disorders that they will encounter in practice. The relationships between Freudian and other psychological concepts are also examined in relation to Buddhism, to show both similarities as well as variances.

Application of the above knowledge base with a view to transform the personality is the primary goal of Buddhist psychotherapy. This holistic approach contrasts with the common symptomatic treatment in conventional practice. However, Buddhist psychotherapy is similar to conventional psychotherapies in that the client is assigned the major role in the healing process, while the therapist plays a facilitative role. The methods proposed do not involve converting clients to Buddhism. Our sincere aim is only to help clients, who probably are mainly Buddhists or free thinkers, to view their problem from a healthy perspective. Specific case studies provide examples for practitioners who may wish to apply the knowledge base presented.

The first section of this paper presents detailed information on the theoretical background that would be useful to psychotherapists. In the second section application of this knowledge base in dealing with actual clients is presented.

(3) Commonly translated as, "The Four Noble Truths."

(4) Commonly translated as, "The Noble Eightfold Path."

(5) This uncommon translation of the eight steps in the eightfold way is an effort to facilitate comprehension.

Historical Survey

Historical survey

Psychotherapy, as it is practiced in the modern world, began with Sigmund Freud, the Viennese neurologist who turned introspective psychologist and psychoanalyst, at the beginning of the twentieth century. Later followers as well as dissenters began to modify or reformulate his theories. Today, there is only a jumble of theories, each in disagreement with the others. Students are confused and practitioners generally take an eclectic position because they are undecided as to which approach to take. There are a few practitioners, however, who choose just one position and adhere to it. Of late, many books have mushroomed, condemning psychotherapy. These writers argue that modern psychotherapy as well as psychoanalysis is a failure.

Although psychotherapy has gone into disrepute today, among several thinkers, people in Europe and even in North America, often go to the psychotherapist, hoping to find a solution to their diverse emotional problems. Going to the psychotherapist today is like going to the family doctor. It is not only the abnormal people who visit the therapist today; even normal people visit the therapist for counsel, when overcome by worries and anxieties. Even the law courts have started consulting therapists to decide upon the sanity of criminals. The therapists have a great influence on the thinking of people. Even politicians are concerned about this trend. People, who formerly visited the priest or minister for advice, when they were in trouble, today visit the therapist.

Probably due to this fact, Christian ministers and Catholic priests have started studying modern psychology, and they practice psychological counselling as a part of their ministerial work. Buddhist teachers, living in the West, are often called upon to help people with their emotional problems. They have also recognized the need for a form of Buddhist psychotherapy. Some modern psychologists who have studied and practiced Buddhist meditation find that some of the Buddhist concepts appear to come in conflict with modern psychological theory and practice. Therefore, the Buddhists who are interested in helping are faced with the task of coming up with a Buddhist theory and practice of psychotherapy.

No researcher seems to realize that Buddhism, in its original form, was already a form of psychotherapy. Unfortunately, today, the Buddhist practice has descended to the level of a religion of faith and worship. It has lost its psychotherapeutic significance. Therefore the task of the modern Buddhist is not so much to create a new form of therapy that is acceptable to a particular school of Buddhism or way of thinking, but to rediscover the original psychotherapy that is already in existence, though hidden, in the original teachings of the Buddha.

Buddhism as Psychotherapy

Buddhism as psychotherapy

In speaking of the psychotherapeutic aspect of Buddhism, it must be said that psychotherapy is not merely one aspect of original Buddhism. It would be more accurate to say that it was entirely a form of psychotherapy. The Buddha emphatically states in the Buddhist scripture, (*Anguttara Nikaya*), that it may be possible for a person to claim to have been free from physical disease even for a hundred years, but it is not possible for a person to claim to have been free from mental disease even for one day, except a perfected disciple (*Arahat*), or the Buddha himself. A critic may have doubts about this apparently ostentatious claim. Yet it is recognized by all Buddhist scholars that the ultimate aim of the Buddha, according to the early Buddhist scriptures, was to produce *Arahats* who were perfect in mental health. *Arahatship* was the culmination of the Original Buddhist Practice. If the *Arahat* is the only person with perfect mental health, the Buddha's ultimate aim or target was nothing below "perfect mental health" for all human beings who are ready for it. This means that Buddhism is not merely another form of psychotherapy, but rather the "ultimate psychotherapy," that brings about perfection in mental health. In fact, it has been said that while modern psychotherapy attempts to turn abnormal "suffering" to normal "unhappiness," the Buddha has been turning normal "unhappiness" into supernormal "happiness," by bringing people to "perfection in mental health," where even temporary mental disturbances, like common worries and anxieties, come to an end. According to the *Pali Nikaya* teachings, which are considered to be the earliest sources of the teachings of the Buddha, the Buddha has been described as the "Unsurpassable-physician-and-surgeon" (*anuttaro bhisakko sallakatto*), and even as the "Unsurpassable-trainer-of-personality" (*anuttaro purisa damma sarati*). Expressed in modern terminology, these terms may be rendered as "the super psychiatrist" and "the super personality trainer."

The human predicament

With due respect for the above assertions, let us now enter into a more thorough and systematic examination of Buddhist concepts in relation to modern psychotherapeutic theory and practice, which would indeed help us verify the validity of these claims. Before we come to a systematic examination of Buddhist concepts, however, it is necessary to explain the human predicament in modern perspective.

Modern biology tells us that we are but organisms by birth. We are born with five main sense organs: the eye, the ear, the nose, tongue, and the body. We are living in an environment, which constantly stimulates our senses. There are several varieties of disturbances in the environment that stimulate the senses, and each sense organ is sensitive only to one kind of stimulus. One sense organ reacts to stimulation only in one specific way. For example, light affects only the eye, not the ear or the nose. Sound affects only the ear. Similarly, the other senses are specialized to be receptive only to one kind of stimulus. Light stimulating the eye results in seeing, and in the same manner, sounds stimulating the ear results in hearing; so does the nose smell, the tongue taste, and the body feel the touch. All the different sensory data received through the different senses, such as, light, sound, smells, tastes, and touch, are combined or synthesized in the brain, to construct a mental image with a meaning concerning what we perceive. This means, the world that we are aware of is a product of the reaction of the senses to stimulation, accompanied by the activity of the brain, which forms a mental image and gives meaning to it. In other words, the world that we are aware of is a creation of our own minds, and it is going on unconsciously all the time.

Our comprehension of the world is limited by our senses and our brain's ability to reason out. The world that appears to be out there is not really what is found out there. It is only a picture produced in the brain, just as a camera does. The brain in addition gives a meaning to it. Modern psychologists as well as modern philosophers are aware of this fact. This means, the Creator of the world is our own mind, and each individual is living in his/her own "made up world." Yet we communicate with one another through the medium of language, and compare our views with others and so build up a cultural world. Through exchange of ideas, we build up a view of the world common to our culture. This is why each culture has a different view of life, and a different way of doing things. When we meet a person from another culture we begin to see that person as somewhat strange, weird, or offbeat not only in appearance but also in thought, feelings, and behaviour.

It is very important to recognize this fact in the modern world, where there is so much international and intercultural communication. This is not merely a Buddhist dogma, but a fact recognized in modern anthropology, sociology, biology, psychology, and philosophy. Because it is an observable fact, it was also recognized by the Buddha. This realization does away with the common reference to solipsism. Buddhism is not based on dogmas or beliefs but on the observation of experience (*sanditthiko*) here and now (*akaliko*), which any one can verify for oneself (*ehipassiko*), in the crucible of one's own experience (*paccattañ veditabbo viññuhi*). Modern scientists and psychologists seem to be only rediscovering what the Buddha discovered centuries ago. This is why Buddhism was a science rather than a religion at the beginning. It was not a physical science but a mental science or psychology. It was the **science of happiness**. Buddhism, however, is an introspective (*openaiko*) science, unlike the modern physical sciences that focus attention only on the external world that is visible and tangible. This is why it has similarities to Freudian introspective psychology.

It is interesting to note at this point that the modern school of psychology known as Behaviourism holds that, to be scientific, one has to imitate the physical sciences. Behavioural psychologists have focused only on the external objective experience, and rejected introspection as unscientific. They define psychology as "the study of human behaviour," and

avoid the study of mental processes, which are subjective and therefore regarded as unverifiable. The behaviourists recognize the transformation of behaviour that results when the thoughts are changed. It is true that one cannot observe another person's inner experience. Yet, one can observe another person's change of behaviour and make an inference by comparison with one's own experience. For example, if a person A is pinched by a person B, B cannot feel the pain, but B can know whether it hurts A, by observing A's behaviour. This is how we read another's thoughts. This is also how a mother reads a baby's thoughts.

The difficulty about introspection was that subjective mental processes could not be observed objectively, and are therefore they were not supposed to be verifiable. This is not a problem to the Buddhist because the Buddhist is not concerned with observing other people's minds but observing one's own. Buddhism is not a search for knowledge for the sake of knowledge. It is an effort to solve a problem in one's own mind. As the structure and function of the body is the same in every human being, the structure and function of the mind is similar. If one understands one's own mind, one understands other's minds also. This fact makes it possible for a doctor to help a patient, whether the ailment is physical or mental.

According to the Buddha, it is possible to observe the subjective mental process objectively, by first removing the emotional obstacles to observation. It can also be verified by another by testing it in the crucible of one's own experience. If you tell me that a fruit tastes good, I can verify it only by tasting the fruit myself. The fruit may be an objective experience but the taste is a subjective experience. I cannot observe another's sight, sound, smell, taste, feel of touch, or thought, but I can observe mine. This is how a scientist verifies another's experience. If I see bacteria under the microscope, you can verify it by looking at it yourself. If I here the tune of a song, you can verify it by listening to it yourself. If I smell a perfume, you can verify it by smelling it yourself. If I feel the warmth of a cup of tea, you can verify it by feeling it yourself. This is how the scientists perform experiments. If we cannot trust our subjective experience, we will not be able to perform any scientific experiment.

Some psychologists, however, have realized that psychology has to be the study of the mind or mental processes, and that we cannot know about the mind by looking only at the body and its behaviour. Thus the school of Cognitive Psychology has come into being. Modern scientists dealing with quantum physics have begun to realize that the physical world that they attempt to discover is actually a mental construct. There are many books written on this subject by scientists as well as philosophers. Since modern physicists began to realize that the external world is only a product of perception and conception, objectivity has become a misnomer and a myth. In fact, there is no "out" to look at, other than what "seems to be." All that we experience is subjective.

This is why the Buddha called the objective experience, *nama-rupa*, which means, mental image and its identity, and the subjective experience was called, *viññana*, which means, the process of perception. The Buddha also saw that there is no "person" who perceives, or a "thing" that is being perceived, but only the "process of perception" and the "product" of the process, which is also subjective. This means, the subjective experience, which is the "seer," and the objective experience, which is what is "seen," are both mental constructs and not real entities that "exist" in real time and real space. Even space and time are mental constructs. This is the meaning of *suññata* or the "emptiness" of experience, which Mahayana Buddhists commonly refer to. This subjectivity of all experience is neither idealism nor solipsism because the Buddha did not believe in "existence," either subjective or objective. There are no existing "entities" but only activities that begin and end, with change in between. Without understanding this basic premise on which the teaching of the Buddha stands, we cannot understand the problem we are about to discuss.

Modern Psychotherapy

On an examination of the history of the evolution of modern psychotherapy, it can be seen that all modern theories and practices are centred on one fundamental problem, which is understandable in terms of the "structural hypothesis," presented by Sigmund Freud (in 1923).

The structural hypothesis is a provisional theory of Freud which divides the personality into three parts, which are oriented towards three goals. The three parts are: the id that seeks pleasure, the ego that seeks to be in tune with reality, and the superego which seeks to be moral. These three parts of the personality, being differently oriented, must necessarily come into conflict. Freud saw that it is the job of the ego to put this conflict-ridden personality in order. Failure of the ego to do so would result in neurosis. Mental health is the successful performance of the ego duty.

1. *id* – dominated by the **pleasure principle**
2. *ego* – dominated by the **reality principle**
3. *superego* – dominated by the **morality principle**

Almost all modern psychotherapeutic systems could be described in terms of this structural hypothesis. All the different psychotherapeutic systems of today could be broadly classified into two groups, based on this structural hypothesis. They are: (a) those therapies that are mainly concerned with the *id* and its expressions, and (b) those that are mainly concerned with the *ego* and its functions. The *id* psychologies are also seen as affective therapies, while the *ego* psychologies are seen as cognitive therapies.

[Buddha's Teachings - Human Existence Problem](#)

Buddha's teachings – human existence problem

It would not be necessary to discuss, at this point, the details of these different therapies, but it would be extremely important to go into a discussion of the **fundamental psychological problem** revealed through the structural hypothesis of

Freud as well as the teachings of the Buddha. I see no better way to introduce this fundamental problem of human existence than to discuss the contents of the introductory sermon of the Buddha called the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutra*, appearing in the *Samyutta Nikaya*, and translated by me as "**The Revolution of the Wheel of Experience.**"

The Buddha

"Oh disciples, **two extremes** are to be avoided by those who progress beyond the secular life. They are: (1) **devotion to sensual pleasure**, which is inferior, secular, common, immature, and futile; and (2) **devotion to self-mortification**, which is painful, immature, and futile.

"Avoiding these two extremes, Oh disciples, **a medial way** is seen by the One-Awakened-to-Reality, which opens the eyes, brings about wisdom, inner peace, super knowledge, awakening, and the imperturbable serenity, Nirvana. And what is that medial way? It is **the Sublime Eightfold Way** that consists of: Harmonious Perspective, Harmonious Orientation, Harmonious Speech, Harmonious Action, Harmonious Lifestyle, Harmonious Exercise, Harmonious Attention, and Harmonious Equilibrium. This is the medial way seen by the One-Awakened-to-Reality, which opens the eyes, brings knowledge, inner peace, super knowledge, awakening, and the **imperturbable serenity, Nirvana.**

"This, Oh Mendicants, is the **Sublime Reality of Insecurity**: birth is painful, aging is painful, sickness is painful, death is painful, meeting what is unpleasant is painful, parting from what is pleasant is painful, and the inability to obtain what one wants is painful. In short, the five personalized constituents of personality are painful.

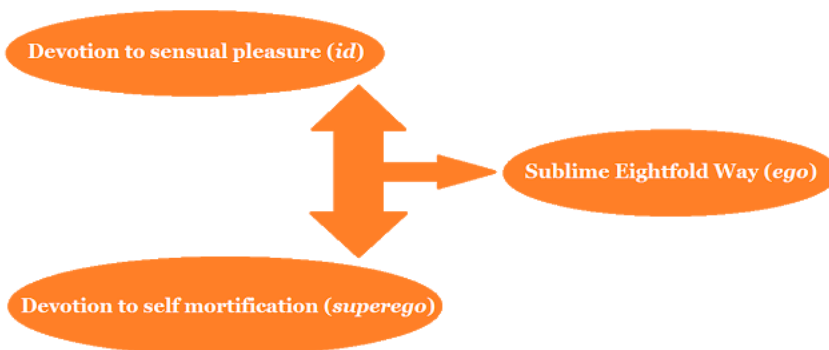
"This, Oh Mendicants, is the **Sublime Reality of the Origin of Pain**: It is that emotional urge, which arises again and again, accompanied by delight and passion, and which takes delight now here now there. It is the urge for sensual pleasures, the urge for existence, and the urge for non-existence.

"This, Oh Mendicants, is the **Sublime Reality of the Cessation of Pain**: It is the dispassionate cessation of the emotional urge without remainder, free from slavery to it, never turning back to it.

"This, Oh Mendicants, is the **Sublime Reality of the Way to the Cessation of Pain**: It is this Sublime Eightfold Way consisting of: Harmonious Perspective, Harmonious Orientation, Harmonious Speech, Harmonious Action, Harmonious Lifestyle, Harmonious Exercise, Harmonious Attention, and Harmonious Equilibrium."

This Sutra begins with the assertion that there are two extreme modes of living to be avoided. One is the pursuit of sensual pleasure, (*Kamasukhallikanuyoga*). The other extreme is self-denial and asceticism (*Attakilamatanuyoga*). Avoiding these two extremes, the Buddha teaches a third medial mode of living (*Majjima Patipada*) called the Sublime Eight-fold Way (*Ariya Atthangika Magga*). This third medial way begins with an awareness of reality, which is followed by a harmonious goal orientation, resulting in a new way of thinking, speaking, acting and living, which is considered to be good, pleasant, and realistic, resulting in inner peace and happiness.

This teaching of the Buddha could easily be examined in relation to the structural hypothesis of Freud. Sigmund Freud pointed to a fundamental problem of human existence, which the Buddha seems to have been aware of more than twenty-five centuries earlier.



The two extremes of the Buddha, when seen from a Freudian stand point, would clearly be the work of the *id* and the *superego*; devotion to sensual pleasure is the work of the *id*, and self-mortification is the work of the *superego*. The medial way, which begins with the Harmonious Perspective, is clearly the work of the *ego*. One small difference, which will be discussed in detail later, is the middle path of Freud, which was the sublimation of energy; while the middle path of the Buddha was the pursuit of tranquility. The Buddha explains this further, in the sutra, in speaking of the Fourfold Sublime Reality.

Unfortunately, the sublimation of energy has left civilized man with discontent, according to Freud himself (*Civilization and its Discontent*, by Sigmund Freud). Modern concern about stress seems to be the obvious result. The Buddha seems to have come up with a solution, according to the above sutra, by proposing the goal of tranquility, which is confirmed by modern experts on stress management. It appears that if Freud saw that sublimation of energy had to be achieved through the pursuit of tranquility, civilized man would not be discontented. This point will be discussed in detail below.

Father of Psychotherapy **Sigmund Freud**

In order to make this method of the Buddha intelligible to the modern Western mind, it is necessary to start by drawing attention to a few discoveries of Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychotherapy, and the originator of modern thought on this subject. Quite contrary to the common opinion that Sigmund Freud was against religion, it must be pointed out that he was only critical of the belief in a Creator God, as found in theistic religion. He was not against the humanistic religions like Buddhism. In fact, he was reiterating some of the teachings of the Buddha. This has been clearly explained by Eric Fromm, the Neo-Freudian psychoanalyst, in his book, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*.

Freud discovered several important facts concerning the human experience, which the Buddha had pointed to, nearly twenty-five centuries before him. Freud also presented, in his own way, the basic problem of the human experience and suggested a solution. This solution, however, could only convert abnormal suffering into normal unhappiness. The Buddha spoke of almost this same problem in greater detail and offered a more proficient solution, through the conscious expansion of the human consciousness. It was more proficient because it was able to transform normal unhappiness into supernormal happiness.

This claim could be seen from modern standards as rather extravagant, but on a closer examination of the methods adopted by the Buddha, one finds that its probability is not easily challenged. The approach taken in this paper will be to present this problem and its solution, first as Freud saw it, and then as the Buddha saw it. The purpose of comparing Buddhist psychology with Freudian psychoanalytical thinking is not to support Freudian thinking or to show an agreement between the two ways of thought. It is only to facilitate the modern Western mind to comprehend the importance of the profound teachings of the Buddha, in relation to the practice of psychotherapy, using ideas already familiar to it. It is also to show that Buddhism is not a mere religion of faith and worship, but a psychotherapy that can make a profitable contribution to modern psychotherapeutic thought.

Psychic Determinism **Psychic determinism**

There are three main types of hypothesis that Freud presented at three different periods in his life, which seem to have and important significance, seen from a Buddhist stand point. The first idea he presented was **psychic determinism**. What Freud meant by this term was that the subjective mental processes arise and continue, depending on the presence of necessary conditions, just as physical processes in the objective physical world do. It was after the 15th century, during the age of enlightenment, that the Western world came to recognize the law of determinism in nature.

In ancient times, primitive men thought that thunder, lightning and other natural phenomena were due to the activity of invisible spirits who controlled the external world. When modern scientists discovered how thunder, lightning, and other such phenomena occurred, the belief in spirits was discarded. What they discovered was the law of determinism, which means that every occurrence in the world was determined by the necessary conditions. This idea is generally accepted today even by school children. Yet unfortunately even in modern times almost everyone believes that the thinking, speaking, and physical behaviour of a person are activities done by a spirit living inside every human body, which is called the "self" or the "soul."

It was Freud who pointed out, in the West, by using the term "psychic determinism," that even mental processes follow the law of determinism. This means, there is no "person" or "self" thinking, speaking, or doing anything inside our body; it is only the workings of a mental process, similar to the workings of a mechanically worked engine, radio, or television set, whose workings are determined by the necessary conditions. The mind of the driver that drives a car at high speed is as mechanical as the engine that pulls the car, even though we like to think otherwise.

This fact was brought to the attention of the people of India by the Buddha twenty five centuries before Freud. The Buddha called this principle of psychic determinism "contingent concurrence" (*paticca samuppada*),⁽⁶⁾ and presented an in-depth exposition of this fact. This fact is the basic principle underlying the philosophy of the Buddha. He even identified his entire teaching with the contingent concurrence: "He who sees the Dhamma sees the contingent concurrence; he who sees the contingent concurrence sees the Dhamma."

Freud, being a neurologist, clearly saw that the mind was not an entity separate from the body but only an activity of the nervous system. He saw the mind as a process of activity that started with sensory stimulation and ended with motor activity. It was the reaction of the organism to environmental stimulation. He compared this process to the activity of a telescope. It was a chain reaction starting with perception, which was followed by an interpretation of what is perceived using memory. This then resulted in an emotional arousal, followed by the release of tension in action. The emotional arousal produced tension in the muscles of the body. This tension was uncomfortable, and therefore it was removed by the release of tension in action.

This release of tension in action, he called the secondary process. The emotional arousal always accompanies a mental image of what is desired, of what is hated, or of what is feared. That he called the memory image. The secondary process begins with this memory image, and it is followed by planning to get what is desired, to get rid of what is hated, or to run away from what is feared. The plan is made using a mental image of the future action, using the cognitive process, intelligence, and reason. This secondary process, however, can also be inhibited, by feelings of shame, and moral

considerations, due to the activity of the conscience. Inhibition can also occur due to considerations of consequences and fear. This inhibition will be discussed in more detail later.

(6) This translation is a more accurate and more meaningful one than the common “dependent origination.”

The Unconscious

The unconscious

The second important idea presented by Freud was the idea of the **unconscious**. He compared the mind to an ice burg, because a greater part of our mental activity occurs without our knowledge. We are conscious of objects but we do not know how we become conscious of these objects. Just as we do not know how our body is made up and how it functions, we do not know how our mind is made up or how it works. This is why we go to a doctor when we are sick, or psychotherapist when we are mentally disturbed; the doctor and the therapist are supposed to know more than we do, about our own body and mind. This is why Freud compared the mind to an ice burg, where its greater part is submerged under the water, and only the small tip is visible above the water. Our consciousness is limited, specially the consciousness of our subjective mental processes and our memories. A greater part of our mind is beyond our awareness and therefore unconscious. The mind, however, is not a solid entity like the ice burg, but an activity like a flame. Its continuity depends on conditions. The activity is mainly the reaction of our body to environmental stimulation.

It is because a greater part of our mind is unconscious that it is so difficult to control the mind. Often our effort to control the mind is like trying to turn off an electric light by breaking the bulb, because we do not know where the switch lies. This unconsciousness or unawareness of our mental processes is because our attention is constantly focused on external circumstances and not on our mental processes. We often blame our circumstances, quite unaware that our worries are created within us, unconsciously. This is why it is important to be introspective. Introspection, however, is only “looking” within. It is only when introspection becomes “insight,” which is “seeing” within, that it is perfected. Our problem therefore is that we are not fully conscious of the mental processes that go on within us. It is only through introspection that we can become conscious of these unconscious processes. The ultimate aim of Freud was to “make the unconscious conscious,” as Eric Fromm constantly reminds us, and it must be done through introspection.

Freud also divided the consciousness into three parts, the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious. The conscious part is like the tip of the ice burg. It is the mental activity that is going on in the present. The preconscious is that part of the memory that can easily be recalled. It is like that part of the ice burg which is just under the water and is visible. The unconscious is like the greater part of the ice burg that is submerged in the water and is invisible. What is in the unconscious cannot be recalled unless by a special technique. This analogy is only an aid to understanding the mental process. It is not to be taken literally. It is necessary to repeat that the mind should not be seen as a solid entity like the ice burg, but as a process of activity.

The Structural Hypothesis

The structural hypothesis

Having dealt with the basic principles of “psychic determinism,” and the “unconsciousness,” which Freud discovered, we shall go on to discuss the very meaningful proposition of Freud, which is called the **structural hypothesis**. This hypothesis is presented not as a fact or truth, but as a provisional theory to explain the workings of the mind, in health and disease. It is the division of the personality into three parts:

Id - Pleasure principle

Ego - Reality principle

Super ego - Morality principle

We have already seen that we are biological organisms, unconsciously reacting to stimuli from the environment. This reaction is first cognitive, in that we perceive some object or occurrence in the environment, and then we interpret what we perceive as pleasant, unpleasant or dangerous. According to how we interpret what we perceive, an emotional arousal takes place, such as a desire for the pleasant object, a hatred of the unpleasant object or a fear of the dangerous object. This leads to tension which makes us uncomfortable. This discomfort forces us to release the tension in action, to obtain what is desired, to get rid of what is hated, to run away from what is feared. Once the tension is released, we feel comfortable again. This way we return to the original equilibrium. This tendency of the mind to release tension and come to a comfortable state of equilibrium, Freud called the pleasure principle. This was why Freud defined pleasure as the release of tension. Both the mind and the body tend to return to the original equilibrium, when disturbed. This tendency is also called **homeostasis**. The original state of equilibrium that one returns to is what is called mental health.

Just as the body fails to return to equilibrium when there is an obstacle to it such as a bacterial or virus infection, a congenital defect, or an accidental injury; similarly, our mental process fails to return to equilibrium if there are obstacles such as, not being able to obtain what is desired, not being able to get rid of what is hated, and not being able to run away from what is feared. This inability to release tension is what is generally called unhappiness, Freud called it “unpleasure,” and the release of tension is what is generally called happiness, Freud called it “pleasure.” Usually, we are not aware of this process in its entirety, we are aware only of our compulsive urge, the discomfort when it is not carried out, and the comfort

when it is carried out. Freud pointed out that we also tend to defend these urges at all costs, if we feel guilty about them. We tend to hide them by means of various defensive mechanisms such as rationalization.

Here, the Buddha is in agreement with Freud. These defensive mechanisms are called *vancana dhamma* in Buddhism. The Buddha pointed out that we also tend to personalize this urge thinking: “this urge is mine,” “I desire,” “I hate,” or “I fear.” The emotional urge, with its tension, that compulsively seeks release in action is what the Buddha called *tanha* (usually translated as craving). He saw that this urge was compulsive (*nandi raga sahagata*), repetitive (*ponobhavika*), and variable in object choice and satisfaction (*tatra tatra abhinandani*).

Freud thought this urge was instinctual, which meant it was inborn and therefore unavoidable, but he described it in the same words: compulsive, repetitive and variable in object choice. Freud called the compulsive urge the *id*, which is the Latin for the word “it.” Freud placed the emotional urge in the neuter gender because it was a mechanical process. The infant’s personality is mainly the *id*; this is why the infant is referred to as “it.” The infant does not think rationally. It is unable to satisfy its desires without help from the mother or the baby sitter. Freud saw that the *id* was seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. He saw this tendency as the “pleasure principle.” In other words, the *id* was dominated by the pleasure principle.

As the child is brought up in society, and trained to behave, he is taught what is right and wrong, good and bad, and thus a conscience is built up, which makes him feel guilty when he makes a mistake in behaviour. This conscience will often prohibit him from getting what is wanted, getting rid of what is not wanted, and running away from what is feared. It is this conscience that Freud called the *superego*. Some Christians identify the conscience as the “promptings of God.” Freud rejected that concept, although he called it the “*super-ego*.” He saw it only as a carry-over from the culture in which the child is brought up. Therefore the *superego* was dominated by the “morality principle.”

As the child grows up, and develops the brain, the rational faculty develops, enabling him to find his way around, and even to get what is wanted, to get rid of what is not wanted, or to run away from what is feared. Freud called the rational faculty the *ego*, meaning “self.” By this word he did not mean a real entity such as a “soul.” For him the *ego* was only a faculty, which is the mental process of thinking or reasoning. It is probable that he used this word due to the influence of Descartes who said, “I think, therefore I am.” This *ego* that can think and reason out, and become aware of the world around, Freud thought, was dominated by the “reality principle.”

Instincts

Instincts

As mentioned earlier Freud saw the *id* as an “instinctual drive,” which came from within the organism, even though it was excited by external stimuli. Freud saw the mind as an energy system or machine, and he saw the machine needed energy to run. The energy, he saw, was in the *id*. That energy he called the *libido*. He saw the *id* as the source of energy (*libido*), which is used up by the *ego* as well as the *super ego*. Thus, ultimately, both the *ego* and the *super ego* work for the benefit of the *id*. It is the *id* that needs pleasure and comfort as well as the need to survive. Freud observed this in the neurotic personalities he was examining. The *id* though blind and unable to do any thing, was seen by Freud, as the main part of the personality, the *ego* and the *superego* are like employees working for the benefit of the *id*, to carryout orders and protect it. They also use the energy of the *id*, to do the work. Freud also saw, however, that even in the normal personality both the *ego* and the *super ego* work for the well-being and preservation of the organism. Freud saw the instinctual impulse of the *id* as the instinct of self- preservation called *eros*. Later he also spoke of the “death wish,” which he called *thanatos*.

As mentioned earlier, the Buddha referred to this same compulsive emotional urge as “thirst” (*tanha*), which Freud referred to as the *id*. Thirst is not something wilfully done by us, it is something that unconsciously occurs following the law of determinism. The reason why the Buddha used the term *tanha* to refer to this emotional urge seems to be the same as that of Freud, when he chose the term *id*. It was because emotion was almost a mechanical process. The Buddha saw that the “thirst” (*tanha*) is in three forms: *kama tanha* (the urge to enjoy pleasure), *bhava tanha* (the urge to continue being), and *vibhava tanha* (the urge to stop being). The first two comes under Freud’s *eros* and the third comes under *thanatos*. The Buddha also saw that normally people are carried away by emotional impulses. He did see that the emotions dominated the normal person: “By emotion the world is lead; by emotion is it dragged about; emotion is that single experience; which keeps the world enthralled.”⁽⁷⁾ (Dhammapada).

The Buddha saw that the emotional urge was strong and compulsive, even though it is “blind to reality” (*avijja*). He referred to the *id* and the *ego* of Freud as two parts of the mind: emotion (*citta*), and reason (*mano*). Yet he also saw that “Reason precedes all experience; reason dominates and creates everything.”⁽⁸⁾ This is where the Buddha seems to differ from Freud. He does not see that the *ego* has to be the servant of the *id*, though most of the time it appears to be so. Freud too saw this when he said that the *ego* is in control even when it is weak. Yet he did not fully realize that because the *ego* activity precedes the *id* activity, and because the *ego* initiates the *id* activity, the *ego* could put an end to the *id* activity. This has been partly seen, however, by the modern cognitive psychologists. Yet the Buddha comprehended this fully and implemented it.

This miscalculation of Freud lies partly in the fact that Freud saw the mind as a machine that needed energy to work, and that he thought the energy came from the *id*. Therefore the *id* is dominant, like the weak millionaire who employs others to do his work. It is true that the *id* has all the energy, but it is the *ego* that is in control of that energy, just the driver and not the engine is in control of the energy in the car.

Freud also saw this *id* and its energy as an inborn instinct that has its origin within the organism, and therefore cannot be removed, but only expressed, suppressed, repressed, or sublimated. Repression is an unconscious process of forgetting the presence of the urge, out of fear or shame. Suppression is a conscious process of denial of gratification of the urge. Sublimation is to gratify the urge only within the bounds of social acceptability. The Buddha, on the other hand, saw the impulse as a process that has its origin outside, in the environment. It is the environmental stimulation that leads to the excitation of the impulse. Therefore, he called it an influx or “influence” (*asava*) that flows in from outside, rather than an instinct that flows out from within.

The Buddha pointed out that the mood, temperament, or disposition of a person is essentially pure and calm in its normal state.⁽⁹⁾ It is polluted or disturbed by adventitious pollutants; just as water is a pure substance, and it becomes impure only due to foreign matter falling into it. Therefore, just as water can be purified through filtration or distillation, the Buddha saw that the temperament can be purified and calmed through a systematic technique, because it is always trying to return to its original equilibrium.

(7) *Cittena niyati loko, cittena parikassati; cittassa eka dhammassa sabbeva vasamanva gu* (dhammapada).

(8) *Mano pubbangama dhamma mano settha mano maya* (dhammapada).

(9) *Pabassaraṇ idaṇ bhikkhave cittaṇ agantuka upakkilesena upakkilittaṇ* (Anguttara Nikaya I, VI, 1.)

[Buddha on The Structural Hypothesis](#)

Buddha on the structural hypothesis

One might ask at this point whether the Buddha ever spoke about anything like the structural hypothesis of Freud. In fact he did in different words. He used an analogy saying that there are three kinds of people in the world.⁽¹⁰⁾ One is blind in both eyes, the second is blind only in one eye, and the third has vision in both eyes. What are these eyes? The first eye is the eye that sees how to satisfy one’s desires. The second is the eye that sees what is good and bad. If we compare this statement with the structural hypothesis, it is clear that the person with both eyes blind is the *id*. And the person with the one eye open is the one whose *ego* has developed, because the first eye that sees how to satisfy desires is the *ego*. The second eye that sees what is good and bad is obviously the *super ego*. The second eye is also called by the Buddha *hiri-ottappa*, which means “abhorrence and remorse” (sometimes translated as “shame and fear”), which is the “reluctance to do evil and repentance for having done evil.” The activity of the *super ego* censuring the *ego* is referred to as, “the self reproaching the self” (*attanam atta upavadati*).

What Freud saw, as the problem, was that the *id* comes in conflict with the *ego* and the *super ego*. The *id* is unaware of the external reality and it demands immediate satisfaction. The *id* is aware only of what it wants; it is not concerned about how it is obtained. The *ego* on the other hand is aware of the external reality, and only the *ego* knows how to gratify the *id*. The *ego* wants to gratify the *id*, but it can be gratified only within the confines of reality. Immediate gratification is not always possible. Therefore, the *ego* might have to postpone gratification. This, the *id* does not like. The *id* is uncomfortable till it is gratified.

This conflict, between the *id* and the *ego*, sounds very much like the familiar conflict between the child and the mother. The child cries for food but only the mother knows how to get it. But then, the mother has to prepare it before the child can have it. This takes time. Therefore, the satisfaction has to be postponed. But the child wants food immediately, and is unconcerned about how it can be got. The child remains hungry and cries till the food is given. The child, according to Freud, is mainly the *id*, and is dominated by the pleasure principle. The emotionally mature adult, on the other hand, whose *ego* is strong, is dominated by the reality principle. Even in the emotionally immature adult, the *ego* is in control, even though it is weak.

If the child makes demands that are detrimental to itself as well as to others, and the mother is undecided, in such a case the father may intervene and demand that the mother must not cater to the child’s irresponsible demands. If the mother follows the father’s advice, the child will not be satisfied at all, and it will continue to cry. So the mother has to find a way of satisfying the child while at the same time following the father’s advice. This is an analogy where the father represents the *super ego*, the mother represents the *ego*, and the child represents the *id*. The *super ego* does not deal with the *id* directly, but only through the *ego*. The *ego* is always in control even when it is weak. The *ego* has to find ways of satisfying the *id* as well as the *super ego*. The *ego* becomes the mediator between the *id*, the *ego*, and also the external reality.

(10) *Monks, there are these three persons found existing in the world.* (Gradual Sayings I, p111, 29.)

[Mental Sickness & Ego Psychology](#)

Mental sickness

It is when the *ego* is weak that the conflict is not resolved, and the personality becomes sick. This means, the *ego* tries to push away the conflict and forgets about it. When this happens the *ego* is unable to pay full attention to the external reality and deal with it, because the unresolved internal conflict starts pestering the *ego* for attention. When this happens, the society in which the individual lives becomes intolerant and begins to condemn the individual for the negligence of responsibilities. This makes the individual become withdrawn from society and feel and behave as an invalid. The individual regresses into a childhood mode of behaviour. This is a description of the neurotic personality. The neurotic, though withdrawn from the external social reality, is fully aware of it.

The psychotic, on the other hand, withdraws from the social reality totally. He does not pay attention to it. He lives in a world of his own making, though he is aware of the physical reality around. In doing so, he loses his social identity, and acquires a physical identity. If he identifies with the physical body, he may experience himself as a robot, or if he identifies himself with the totality of the physical reality, he may experience himself even as God. He experiences as himself what ever he identifies with.

Ego psychology

Freud spoke about mental and physical processes, not about persons. What is called his “personality theory” is only a mechanical theory of personality. He called it the “psychic apparatus.” In other words, he saw the personality to be an impersonal process of psychophysical activity. Therefore, his theory is also called the psychodynamic theory. Although Freud saw the personality as a mechanical process of activity comparable to a machine, or an energy system, some of his followers were dissatisfied with the depersonalization and reification of the personality. Some later psychologists and psychoanalysts who were existentialist thinkers, like R.D. Lang, criticized this way of thinking, considering it to be a dehumanizing of the human being, through “depersonalization” and “reification” of the human personality. (*The divided self*, by R.D. Lang). This latter way of thinking among psychoanalysts came to be called “Ego Psychology.”

Freud saw the *ego* only as an impersonal faculty of reasoning, the main concern of which was to manage the *id* impulses, and to resolve the conflict between the *id* and the *superego*, as well as to deal with the external reality. Later followers saw the *ego* as the “real self” whose main concern was to deal with the external reality. They were mainly concerned with the development of the “sense of self” and the strengthening of the “ego” to deal with the external world.

Freud pointed out that the “sense of self” is formed through the infant’s relationship with the mother. This relationship with the mother was seen as an “object relationship,” where the mother was the object. As Freud saw it, the infant does not see the mother as a separate entity from itself, at the beginning. It is later that the infant notices that the mother appears at times, and disappears at other times, and that the mother is not under its control, as its own legs or arms are. This makes it feel that the mother is a person separate from itself, and so a “sense of self” is formed. Then a relationship of dependence on the mother develops. In this relationship, frustrations and disappointments are experienced. These remain as memories, which affect relationships with other people in later life. These memories also affect the self-concept or self-image in later life, where the “self” can be felt to be weak or strong, resulting in feelings of inferiority or superiority, or what is today called lack of self-esteem.

Later followers of Freud became concerned with the development of the sense of self, which they identified as the *ego*. This psychology based on the concern with the *ego* and its relations with external reality was called “ego psychology,” or “object relations psychology.” The earlier concern with the *id*, and its conflict with the *ego* and *superego*, was called *id* psychology, which was rejected by the later followers of Freud who became interested in *ego* psychology. The new turn took place when the psychoanalysts became concerned with psychosis, which, they thought, was rooted in the *ego*’s relationship with external reality, and the change in the “sense of self”. Formerly, Freud’s main concern was neurosis, though his concern always extended to psychosis as well.

Buddha's Teachings & Freud's Discoveries

The Buddha’s Teachings in Relation to Freud Discoveries

Having discussed some of Freud’s discoveries and how he and some of his later followers tried to conceptualize the problems of human beings both normal and abnormal, let us now examine some of the Buddha’s teachings in relation to these findings of Freud and the Freudians. First of all, the Buddha too saw the individual human being as an organism with senses, a nervous system and motor activity. He too saw a psycho-physical process starting from the senses and ending up in motor activity. He saw it occurring in four main stages; perceptual activity (*viññana*), cognitive activity (*mano*), affective activity or emotion (*citta*) and the physical action which is the release of tension. This occurs, however, unconsciously. When we are conscious, on the other hand, and consciously interpret what is occurring, it is possible to act rationally.

Unconscious = stimulus → perception → cognition → emotion → action = REACTION

Conscious = stimulus → perception → cognition → rational action = RESPONSE

The presence of mind (*sati*) and the consideration of consequences, before the release of tension, can prevent the release of tension, if it is detrimental to oneself and others. Presence of mind during the action can stop the action. Reflection about and action already done can stop the action from being repeated in the future. Absent minded impulsive behaviour which is unconscious can be called a reaction, which the Buddha called an “unworthy action” (*akusala kamma*). A rational action done with presence of mind, which is consciously done, can be called a response, which the Buddha called a “worthy action” (*kusala kamma*).

Personalization

Personalization

The teaching of the Buddha about personalization (*upadana*) is very significant, in relation to Freud’s structural hypothesis. He spoke of four kinds of personalization as follows:

BUDDHA

1. Personalization of likes and dislikes for pleasure and pain (*kama upadana*) = (*id*)
2. Personalization of rational thoughts about reality (*ditthi upadana*) = (*ego*)
3. Personalization of moral principles (*silabbata upadana*) = (*superego*)
4. Personalization of the notion of self (*atta vada upadana*)

FREUD

- id* – the emotional urge dominated by the pleasure principle
- ego* – the rational faculty dominated by the reality principle
- superego* – the conscience dominated by the morality principle

It is clear that there is a parallelism between Freud's structural hypothesis and the Buddha's account of personalization. Freud considered the *id*, the *ego*, and the *superego* as structural divisions of the personality. This assumption was based on the notion of "personality," which was a kind of "self." Even the use of the terms *ego* and *superego* implies that a concept of "self" underlies the hypothesis. The *id*, which is the Latin for "it," has been called as such because Freud saw the *id* as a mechanical process. It seems that Freud called the rational part the *ego* following Descartes' idea, "I think therefore I am." (*cogito ergo sum*). The *superego* was also seen as a part of the *ego*. This is why it was named as such. This means, the idea of "self" remains in hiding in the structural hypothesis, even though Freud considered the mind or personality to be an energy system or machine. This helped his followers to lay stress on the "*ego*," and want to make it more real.

The Buddha's fourfold personalization explains the problem contained in the structural hypothesis. Freud has personalized the *id*, *ego*, and the *superego*, in calling them parts of the personality. In addition, he has personalized the notion of "self" in using the term personality. According to the Buddha, the idea of personality is the result of personalization. This explains why the critics condemned Freud for depersonalizing the personality when Freud compared the personality to a machine. Although Freud compared the mind to a machine or energy system, even calling it the "psychic apparatus," and even speaking about psychic determinism, it appears that he could not get the idea of "self" as "personality" out of his mind. This is why this hypothesis is also called the personality theory of Freud. This means that Freud did not really make a full depersonalization of the personality.

The later followers of Freud carried the idea of personality even further. They criticized Freud for seeing the *ego* only as the rational faculty. They wanted the *ego* to represent a real person or "self." The ego psychology, or object relations psychology that resulted was interested in the relationship between the "self" and the external world.

In psychoanalytic therapy, the aim of Freud was to integrate these three parts of the personality. Neurosis and psychosis was seen as a disintegration of the personality. In explaining neurosis, Freud thought that the *id*, being a part of the personality, is denied expression, and is rejected by the *ego* through repression.

[Buddha and the Freudians](#)

Buddha and the Freudians

While the later Freudians complain that Freud did not emphasize the idea of "self" enough, or that Freud depersonalized the personality, Buddhist thinking seems to do the opposite, in complaining that Freud did not depersonalize the personality enough. Modern psychologists who have become interested in Buddhism and Buddhist meditation find this to be problematic. Some try to bring about a compromise by saying that one has to build the self before it can be removed. Let us examine this problem to see if we can find a better solution.

The problem, according to Freud, is that the three parts of the personality are in conflict, because these three parts seek three different goals as follows:

- id* – seeks pleasure
- ego* – seeks to be realistic
- superego* – seeks to be moral or good

Freud sought a middle path to solve the problem. It was not the expression of the urge, to seek pleasure, as the *id* wanted, nor was it repression, or suppression as the *superego* wanted. Freud's middle path was sublimation. By the term sublimation Freud meant channelling the energy of the *id* along a socially acceptable path. If one is interested in sexual relations, instead indulging in rape or adultery, one can get married, or channel the energy through social or religious service. This solution seems to be very Buddhist, in that it represents "good conduct" (*sila*), according to the five precepts, which is the common practice of the good Buddhist householder (*gihī*) or laymen. From the Freudian perspective, it is sublimation or the practice of the normal healthy personality. From the general, common perspective, it is the civilized way of living.

Freud, however, pointed out that the civilized way of living is living with discontent, (*Civilization And Its Discontent*, Sigmund Freud) because the satisfaction is limited by confining oneself to the socially acceptable way of living. The *id* is not fully satisfied. A man may not be interested in one wife, or woman may not be interested in one husband. This means discontentment. Therefore, the aim of psychoanalysis was only to change abnormal suffering into normal unhappiness.

[Buddha's Middle Path](#)

Buddha's Middle Path

The Buddha went further than Freud. He also came up with a middle path, but this was different. He saw a way of integrating the personality by presenting a new goal to pursue. It was the goal of "tranquillity." Freud himself saw this possibility, when he said that the psychic apparatus was ultimately seeking a state of equilibrium through release of tension. But he did not see this as the solution to the conflict. The Buddha saw that what the emotional impulse wanted was the state of relaxation and mental calm, which is a state of happiness. When this goal of tranquillity is consciously pursued, not only is the *id* satisfied but also the *ego* as well as the *superego*. The *id* is satisfied because of the relaxation of tension. The *ego* is satisfied because relaxation does not come in conflict with reality. The *superego* is satisfied because relaxation does not come in conflict with moral principles or social norms. This pursuit of tranquillity of mind is the pursuit of NIRVANA (*nir*, non + *vana*, movement). Nirvana is the **imperturbable serenity** of mind, which even the Stoics and the Epicureans spoke of in the West.

Another important insight of the Buddha becomes applicable here. When Freud thought of the structural hypothesis, this hypothesis became useful to understand the mechanics of the neurosis or even the psychosis. Yet it had a shortcoming, which was that by seeing the mind as a structure made up of three parts that come in conflict, one tends to think of the mind as an entity similar to a material entity that occupies space. Even if the mind is considered to be immaterial, it could still be conceived as a spiritual entity. To compare the mind to a machine, or see it as a psychic apparatus, or any structure, is to see it as an entity. This easily encourages the formation of the concept of “self” in relation to the mind. To personalize the emotions, or consider the emotions to be a part of oneself, is to lose control over emotions.

Buddha's Functional Hypothesis

Buddha's Functional Hypothesis

In order to avoid this difficulty, the Buddha looked at the mind from a functional point of view, which falls in line with Freudian thinking as well as Buddhist thinking. For the Buddha, the mind is not an entity separate from the body. It is simply the subjective experience of the activity of the nervous system and the whole body. Put in modern terminology, mind is the reaction of an organism to environmental stimulation. The Buddha pointed out that there are three phases in this reaction that we refer to as the mind. They are the perceptual activity (*viññana*), cognitive activity (*mano*) and the affective activity (*citta*), which ultimately ends up in the physical behavioural activity (*kamma*). The first three are observable as subjective mental experiences, and not as objective material entities. Even the fourth is a physical activity, rather than a material entity.

Perceptual Activity

(*viññana*)

↓

Cognitive Activity

(*mano*)

↓

Affective Activity

(*citta*)

↓

Behavioural Activity

↓

(*kamma*)

If we take as an example a young man meeting a girl: when light falling on the girl is reflected, and falls on the eye of the young man, he begins to see the girl. That is perception (*viññana*). Having perceived, he begins to interpret what was seen using his cognitive faculty (*mano*). Let us say, the interpretation was, “I see a sexy girl.” This results in an emotional arousal (*citta*). A message goes from the brain to the sexual gland, and a sexual hormone is secreted into the blood, and changes take place in the young man's body. The body gets ready for action. Of course the young man being a civilized person does not decide to rape the girl. He has a conscience that prevents him from doing so. This example explains how the three stages of the reaction works.

The young man, however, has a problem at this point. There is a conflict in his mind, as Freud pointed out. The conscience or *superego* is in conflict with his *id*, and the *ego* has to bring about a settlement. The *ego* decides to go and speak to the girl in a courteous way and propose a date. This would be a Freudian solution. Yet the young man may be disappointed if the girl rejects him or if he sees her boy friend coming to take her away. This is civilization and its discontentment.

The Buddha goes further in suggesting a different solution. That is to understand that happiness comes from tranquillity of mind and not from gratification of sense desires. Therefore the young man should only take a deep breath and consciously relax the body, and calm the mind, and stop thinking about the girl. This is not easy because the emotional arousal is not a mere thought. The emotion is a change in the blood chemistry, and change in the function of various organs in the body. This means, the emotion is a physical change rather than a mere thought. Yet it is the thought that created the physical change. Just as the manipulation of a switch turned the light on, and no amount of blowing on the light can turn it off; in the same way, no amount of fighting with the emotion can turn the emotion off. The emotion is only a disturbance in the body, and it is created by a thought. It is only by changing the thought, which got the emotion started, that the emotional activity can be stopped. This is a fact recognized even by the cognitive psychologists today.

What this means, in Freudian terminology, is that the *id* is the result of the activity of the *ego*. Therefore the *ego* does not have to repress, suppress or sublimate the *id*; the *ego* has only to realize that the trigger that activates the *id* is in the hands of the *ego*, and by thinking in a different way, the *ego* can make the *id* to stop the annoying behaviour. It is true that the *id* contains energy, but this energy is aroused by the *ego*, because the trigger is in the hands of the *ego*. Just as the dog's tail is not shaking by itself, it is the dog itself that is shaking it. The dog may be unconscious of it, but by becoming conscious it can be stopped. If the *ego* changes the interpretation, of the circumstance, the *id* will stop demanding. The cognitive psychologists have begun to realize this only recently.

Freud's Mistake

Freud's Mistake

The mistake that Freud appears to have made is his emphasis on instinct. He thought the emotion is inborn, and therefore it starts within and seeks an outlet. Because the emotion is inborn, Freud thought, it cannot be eliminated; he thought it has to be gratified in some way or another. The Buddha did not see the emotion as instinctual. He saw it as something started by

an external stimulus. He saw the emotion as a part of a chain reaction, where the intellectual activity of interpretation preceded the emotional activity. Stating the Buddha's position in Freudian terminology, the *ego* activity precedes the *id* activity. Freud, however, saw it the other way. He thought that the *id* activity preceded the *ego* activity, and that the purpose of the *ego* was mainly to cater to the *id*. This is a serious mistake that Freud made, from the Buddhist stand point.

The other mistake of Freud was his breaking up the mind into parts that come in conflict. The *ego* and the *id* should have been seen as parts of a continuous process of activity, one leading to the other, instead of being independent activities opposed to each other. He did attempt this at the beginning, when he took up the functional approach comparing the mind to a telescope. It was the structural hypothesis that created the confusion although it did help understand the conflict in the mind of the neurotic. The conflict displayed by the structural hypothesis comes about due to the ignorance of the neurotic patient about how the emotional arousal gets started. The problem created by the neurotic is like pressing the accelerator and the break at the same time, while driving a motor vehicle. It is the *ego* that arouses the emotion; for example the boy appreciating the beauty of the girl is the work of the *ego*. This arouses the passionate desire for the girl, which is the *id*. Now the conscience, which is the *superego*, comes to block this arousal and tells the *ego* to stop it, and the *ego* holds the break, while continuing to appreciate the girl. That is like holding the break and pressing the accelerator at the same time. This creates the conflict between the *id* and the *ego*.

The solution of the Buddha was to look at the mind from a functional stand point. That is, to see the mind as a reaction of an organism to sensory stimulation. The reaction being in four stages: perception (*viññana*), cognition (*mano*), emotion (*citta*), and action (*kamma*). This reaction is what creates all the trouble, as the sutra quoted above indicates. The Buddha called this reaction a compulsive thirst (*tanha*). A thirst is not something that we do. It is something that happens to us. It is almost a mechanical process. Freud recognized this when he called it the *id*, the Latin form of "it," the neuter gender. The trouble created by this thirst, the Buddha called pain (*dukkha*). The solution that the Buddha suggested was not sublimation but eradication, which was to take it off by the root. The way to uproot it is to stop the incorrect thinking, which arouses the emotion, and that in Freudian terms is to correct the *ego* activity. This is also the method of modern cognitive therapy.

[Solution to the Emotional Problem](#)

Solution to the Emotional Problem

This means, in order to solve the problem created by the emotions, the underlying philosophy or the assumptions behind the thinking must change. That is, the problem and its solution must be understood. When the underlying philosophy is changed, a reorientation of the mind takes place, which is the pursuit of tranquillity. This reorientation results in a different way of seeing life and interpreting circumstances. For example, the young man who met the girl and appreciated her beauty will now think in a different way. Instead of looking at the surface of the body, he will begin to think of the inside of the body from an anatomical point of view. He begins to think of the skin, the flesh, the blood, the bones, the intestines, the faeces and all the repulsive elements contained in the body. He can also think of the mental condition of the girl, which could be very unpleasant, even though she may have good looks. This is a broader outlook than the narrow superficial perspective that leads to the emotional reaction. Often people begin to acquire the broader outlook only after marriage. This seems to be the reason for most divorces. This broader outlook is accompanied by the philosophy that true happiness comes through tranquillity of mind and not through the gratification of sense desires; and this means, changing the goal of life to calmness or tranquillity.

Here we may be reminded of Alfred Adler, who spoke about the importance of the philosophy of life and the goal orientation. Yet this fact was taught by the Buddha twenty five centuries before Adler. The Sublime Eightfold Way of the Buddha is based on this principle. It begins with the Harmonious Perspective and the Harmonious Goal-orientation. The extent to which Adler was influenced by the Buddha is a mystery, as it is in the case of Sigmund Freud. It appears that Freud was influenced by the first and second truths of the Buddha, while Adler was influenced by the fourth.

This method of the Buddha for eradicating the emotional reaction needs to be fully understood by modern psychologists, and it can be of great help in their practice, as well as their research. The Sublime Eightfold Way, however, is a gradual progressive process of growth. It does not result in a sudden transformation. It should be carried out step by step. The first step is to understand the problem and its solution. The problem is the unconscious reaction of the organism to environmental stimulation. The solution is to stop this reaction by becoming conscious of it. At first we stop the active phase of the reaction. This is the stopping of emotional behaviour (*sila*). The second step is to stop the emotional arousal. This is to learn to relax the body and to calm the mind (*samadhi*). The third step is to learn to change one's way of interpreting circumstances. This is to cultivate a broad mind, as opposed to a narrow mind, and to consider the importance of others in our lives, and to practice patience, tolerance and the understanding of the other's point of view. Learning to calm the mind is called tranquillity meditation (*samatha bhavana*). Learning to change our way of thinking is called insight meditation (*vipassana bhavana*).

This practice of emotional control or purification of mind has four parts:

- (1) Preventing emotional arousal (*samvara*)
- (2) Eliminating emotions already aroused (*pahana*)
- (3) Cultivating calmness (*bhavana*)
- (4) Maintaining calmness (*anurakkhana*)

Let us compare the mind to a room. We want to clean the room. The first step is to shut the doors and windows through which the dirt enters the room. The second step is to take the dirt off from the room by sweeping or using a vacuum cleaner. The third step is to put clean furniture and decorate the room. The fourth step is to constantly keep watch and maintain the cleanliness.

Clearing the mind of emotional disturbances is also done in a similar way. First we prevent the arousal of emotions. This is done by guarding the senses, because the sensory stimulation is the starting point of the chain reaction that ends up in the emotional arousal. There are three conditions necessary for the arousal to take place: for example, the eye being open, an object being visible, admiring the object. It is not possible to keep our eyes closed all the time, or to avoid things coming into our field of vision. The third condition is under our control. That is the way we think about what we see. We can stop thinking about what we see, or we can think in a way that emotions do not arise. This is guarding the senses.

The second step is to get rid of emotions already aroused. It is important to understand that an emotion always carries a mental picture along with it. As long as this picture is in the mind, the emotion will remain. It is only by throwing the picture out of the mind that the emotion can be thrown out. The emotion as we understand it is physical and the picture is mental. The mental part is the cognitive part which is the Freudian *ego*. It is the *ego*, therefore, that is responsible for the continuity of the emotion. The mental image does not stand alone; it also comes with a verbal interpretation. Both the image and the verbal interpretation have to be thrown out. In other words, it is by changing the thinking of the *ego* that the emotion can be removed. This is a method used in cognitive psychotherapy today.

The third step is to cultivate calm. It is important to remember at this point that the emotional reaction occurs when we focus our attention on an external object, and then start thinking about it. Instead of doing that, if we can get into the habit of focusing attention on what is going on in the mind and body, which is the reaction, then the reaction automatically stops. This is like switching off the light. A switch is on when two wires are touching, so that the current begins to flow. The switch is off when the two wires are separated. In a similar way, when the attention is focussed on an external object, the reaction occurs. When the attention is taken off the external object, and focused on the body and the mind, the switch is off, and the reaction stops. Of course, if the emotion is already excited, when we take the attention off the object, the emotion does not disappear suddenly like the light disappearing when the switch is turned off. The emotion is more like the hot plate than the light in this case. The emotion takes time to calm down, just as the hot plate takes time to cool down, even when the switch is turned off. This is the way the calmness of the mind is achieved and maintained. This method of introversion of attention is called “introspection” (*satipatthana*),⁽¹¹⁾ which is looking within, resulting in “in-sight” (*upekkha*),⁽¹²⁾ which is “seeing within.”

The last or fourth step is to maintain the calm, so that the mind can never be disturbed again. This maintenance of absolute calm comes from “under-standing” (*pañña*),⁽¹³⁾ which follows “in-sight” (*upekkha*), which is seeing within, or seeing what is inside. In other words, in-sight is becoming aware of the subjective mental process, which is the reaction of one’s body to environmental stimulation. By focusing the attention within, or introspection, carried out in a relatively calm state of mind, one becomes aware of one’s own reaction to stimulation. This happens progressively in degrees. First one becomes aware of the physical manifestations of the reaction (*kayanupassana*). Then one becomes aware of the reaction in terms of sensations in the body (*vedananupassana*). Then one becomes aware of subtle emotional arousals, which one is not aware of normally (*cittanupassana*). Next one becomes aware of the concepts that start the emotional reaction (*dhammanupassana*). When one has gained in-sight in degrees this way, one begins to become fully aware of the chain reaction that begins with sensation leading to perception, conception, emotion, and action. This makes one realize that what we call the mind is this impersonal, unconscious, chain reaction. There is no “self” involved with the thinking feeling or acting. Becoming conscious of this unconscious process, stops the emotional arousal. With the calmness of mind gained this way, one then begins to become fully aware of the cognitive process, beginning with sensation, leading to perception, and ending in conception. Then one begins to realize that the object to which we normally react as well as the subjective “self” are only mental constructs. The reality of the subject as well as the object is not real any more.

The mind then enters a state that can never be disturbed. One then becomes aware of the Sublime Reality of “impersonal experience” (Dhamma).⁽¹⁴⁾

Normally people stand on concepts taking them to be reality. People basically stand on the concept of existence, taking it to be real. When one has seen that the subject and object are only mental constructs the reality of existence ceases. The reality of both subject and object ceases when one gains this in-sight. Then one begins to see that existence is only a mental construct, created through the process of perception. In other words, existence is only a cognitive experience. Cognitive experience is the basis of existence. Cognitive experience precedes existence, and existence is a product of the cognitive experience. When one realizes this, one stops standing on existence, and begins to stand on the cognitive experience, which is the basis of existence. This is “under-standing” (*pañña*).

In other words, this is to Awaken from the “dream of existence” into the Sublime or Transcendent Reality – “Impersonal Experience” (Dhamma).

As one’s awareness of the reaction develops to a high level, and one begins to become aware of the perceptual process, when one begins to see that there is no real person thinking or doing anything here, when even the reality of the object perceived ceases to be real, then there is only a process of activity going on due to the presence of the necessary conditions. When the conditions cease, the activity ceases. With this realization, the “sense of self” disappears, and then the emotional reaction has no meaning. Therefore this realization stops all emotional reactions and maintains the calmness and imperturbability of the mind, which is called NIRVANA.

At this level a person has transcended the normal human level and has reached a supernormal level. This supernormal level of under-standing is the “experiencing of experience.” It is also the “awakening from the dream of existence.” At this level, one does not personalize experience thinking, “this experience is mine,” nor does one identify oneself as, “this is my self.”

- (11) This is a more meaningful translation than the common translation, “mindfulness.”
 (12) This translation is more accurate than, “equanimity.”
 (13) This is a much more meaningful translation than the common, “insight.” This is explained further below.
 (14) This is a special translation of the word Dhamma, which is extremely meaningful.

Transcendence Through Evolution

Transcendence through evolution

This awakening from the dream of existence is a transcendence of the normal consciousness to a supernormal level, which is extremely rare in the world. It is seen as an evolutionary level of the human consciousness. The human consciousness, obviously, must evolve to a higher level some day. The normal human being is not at the highest evolutionary level. This is why there is so much crime, war and mental sickness prevalent in the world today. The Buddhists believe that, individuals do evolve beyond this level from time to time, and it has occurred in the past. Buddhists believe that the teaching of the Buddha is a description of the path of evolution of the human being. They also believe that the Buddha represents that fully evolved state, and his perfected disciples were also fully evolved individuals. They were those who had transcended the normal consciousness.

Buddhists also believe that it is this transcendence that all religions describe as union with God. Buddhists call it “awakening from the dream of existence.” The normal consciousness is aware of a “self existing in the world” while the supernormal consciousness is aware of the mental process that creates this “world” and the “self” in it, through the process of perception. By becoming aware of the process of perception, the reality of the “world” and the “self” is lost. This is the awakening from the dream of existence. Just as a magician looking at a magic show sees no magic in it, the one who has awakened from the dream of existence has seen how the process of perception creates the world and all the objects in it, including oneself, and therefore he sees nothing really existing, either subjective or objective. This is not a fact unknown to modern psychologists and philosophers, but they don’t normally take it seriously into their everyday life, because the normal human being, although quite rational, is dominated by emotions which are blind.

This transcendence of the normal human consciousness can be viewed as the culmination of the evolutionary process, spoken of by Charles Darwin. He pointed out that evolution takes place because of a “struggle for existence.” He spoke of a “survival of the fittest,” but in reality, no individual survived, only the species continued. Every molecule that was formed had to break down, because it was dependent on the necessary conditions. It was the energy released by this breaking down that was used to build a new one. So the struggle continued but no individual survived. This means, only a struggle to exist continues, but no individual continues to exist. In other words this struggle is a failure. The continuity of this futile struggle is only a continuity of suffering? Every atom, every molecule, every thought and every emotion is in a continuous process of coming and going. Existence is a static concept, but life is a dynamic process of change, like the water in a river that is changing all the time. It is not the same river that one sees the next moment. This is why Heraclitus of Ephesus said, “one cannot enter the same river twice.” In a similar way, the baby that is born is not the girl or boy that gets married; similarly the old person that dies is not the girl or boy who got married. A person or individual is not a static entity, but a dynamic process of change like a wave in the ocean. Does a wave really exist? Does a changing process really exist? Is it only when the change is found to be slow that we tend to form the static concept – existence? If so, do we, you and I, really exist? “Existence is an illusion,” or more appropriately a “delusion.” If we can accept this, we will be immortal, because if we do not exist, how can we grow old or die? This immortality is not eternal life. It is freedom from the “delusion of existence.” This is the immortality shown by the Buddha, which can be gained through the evolution of consciousness. When the human consciousness has evolved, to the level where this truth has been fully comprehended, but in the absence of interfering blind emotions, the struggle for existence stops. This is why Buddhist meditation is of two types: first freeing the mind of emotions (*samatha*), and then only developing the thinking faculty (*vipassana*).

This process called life, which started as an unusual molecule that was able to absorb atoms from its surroundings and create molecules of its own kind, made a terrible mistake quite unconsciously. When, through the evolutionary process, the human animal became conscious, and able to think rationally, unhindered by emotions, he became aware of the mistake of struggling to exist. He realized that it was only a struggle to become permanent in an impermanent world. It was a futile struggle where only disappointment and frustration persisted. Becoming aware of this fact, the wise human animal stopped the futile struggle, and thereby stopped not only the process of evolution itself, but also all sufferings connected with illusory existence.

The Humanistic Saviour

The Humanistic Saviour

This is why the Buddhist does not think, “the saviour of the world is the Creator of the world.” The Creator cannot be a saviour because he is the Creator of suffering. The true saviour can only be a human being who can free himself from this suffering by transcending the normal human consciousness, which is dreaming that a “self” exists in a world that exists.” This saviour awakens from this “dream of existence,” and then teaches others to awaken from this terrible nightmare, “the dream of life and death.” The all knowing, all powerful, all good “God” is not an unknown Creator, but a known human being who has transcended all human weaknesses. Such an individual is the Buddha, and He is therefore the true God of the Buddhists. He is called “God-become” (*brahma bhuto*).

This description of the Buddha helps one understand that Buddhism is neither theistic nor atheistic. It is humanistic because this concept of God is a humanistic concept of God. It recognises the potential divinity of the human being. It is through the process of evolution that the human being evolves to the level of God. This is the humanistic way of union with God, which all religions speak of in their own way. God is understood in Buddhist thinking to be only the human concept of perfection. God is the ideal of perfection that human beings conceive, and struggle to realize through the practice of religion. When a

human being does realize this ideal, he is called an Awake One, a Buddha. When this occurs, the process of evolution stops, because the futile struggle to exist stops and one has “Awakened” from the “dream of existence.” The essence of this “God” is not “existence,” as in the case of the theistic God; the essence of this God is “non-existence.” This God does not exist, even when others see Him as an existing person. This is the anthropomorphic God of the Buddhist.

Tranquillity

Tranquillity

The method of entering a state of tranquillity of the mind through meditation was known to the Indian yogis even before the Buddha. There were eight deep levels of tranquillity that the yogis had reached during the time of the Buddha. The Buddha went only one step further and temporarily stopped all activities of the mind by entering a state of quiescence which was similar to hibernation. This state was called *sañña vedayita nirodha*, which means, “cessation of sensation and feeling.” It was when rising from this state that the Buddha “awakened from the dream of existence.”

These levels of deep tranquillity were practiced, in order to rest the mind temporarily, not to remain in them permanently. This temporary tranquillity was not Nirvana. It was only a means to Nirvana. Nirvana is a state of inner tranquillity that could never be disturbed under any circumstance, even in the face of death. It is a state of tranquillity that lasts throughout the normal life. This imperturbable serenity of mind is gained by awakening from the dream of existence and death. It is immortality through freedom from the “delusion of existence.”

In order to achieve this, supernormal and extremely high level of development, called Nirvana, which is extremely rare in the world, both ancient and modern, one has to give up the experience of existence of a “self” in the world. It is the “self-consciousness” that stood as an obstacle to imperturbability. This “self-consciousness” becomes a problem even when we try to control our impulses, because we tend to identify with our emotions and personalize them, and thereby become unable to let-go of what is a part of oneself. It is only when one is able to “awaken from the dream of existence” that the self-consciousness disappears. This was the special attainment of the Buddha, by which he went beyond the other yogis. He did this by attaining to the ending of all mental activity and returning again to the normal state. In doing so, he saw how the mind created the “world” and the “self” in it. He also saw how the “self” gets involved with the “world” in emotional relationships, and how all the painful experiences result, including meeting the unpleasant, parting from the pleasant, frustration, aging, disease, death, and the grief, lamentation, pain, depression, and exhaustion that follows. This attainment is rising above the normal to the supernormal state, which is freedom from all suffering.

This supernormal state, however, is not what we are aiming at in this paper; it was mentioned only to indicate what the teaching of the Buddha aims at, ultimately.

Western Philosophy Throughout History

Western philosophy throughout history

Western philosophers, through out the history of Western philosophy, have been “self” oriented in their thinking. It was Descartes who made the categorical statement “I think, therefore I am” (*cogito ergo sum*). The existentialist philosophers assumed the “existence” of the “self,” even when they seemed to deny it. Even Sigmund Freud, who saw the personality as an energy system, used the term *ego* to refer to the rational part of the mind. His later followers became more interested in the *ego* as a reality, and changed their focus from a concern with the conflict between the *id* and the *ego*, and began to focus on what they saw as the more realistic relation between the *ego* and its object. Therefore, Modern Western psychotherapy is often seen as a way of strengthening the “ego.” It was Alfred Adler, who was an early associate of Freud, who first pointed in that direction.

Problem of Self-esteem

The problem of self-esteem

Mathew McKay and Patrick Fanning, in their book *Self Esteem*, write: “One of the main factors differentiating humans from other animals is the awareness of self: the ability to form an identity and then attach a value to it.” “In other words,” they continue, “you have the capacity to define who you are and then decide if you like that identity or not. The problem of self-esteem is this human capacity for judgement. It's one thing to dislike certain colours, noises, shapes, or sensations. But when you reject parts of yourself, you greatly damage the psychological structures that literally keep you alive.

“Judging and rejecting yourself causes enormous pain. And in the same way that you would favour and protect a physical wound, you find yourself avoiding anything that might aggravate the pain of self-rejection in any way. You take fewer social, academic, or career risks. You make it more difficult for yourself to meet people, interview for a job, or push hard for something where you might not succeed. You limit your ability to open yourself with others, express your sexuality, be the centre of attention, hear criticism, ask for help, or solve problems. “To avoid more judgements and self-rejection, you erect barriers of defence. Perhaps you blame and get angry, or bury yourself in perfectionist work. Or you brag. Or you make excuses. Sometimes you turn to alcohol or drugs.”

McKay and Fanning also point out that hundreds of researchers have been working on this problem, trying to discover the causes of self-esteem and ways of developing it. From what these two authors say, it is quite clear that modern psychologists have begun to see that the psychological problem is the lack of “self esteem,” and therefore they have made “self esteem” their main focus of attention. They have begun to think that the solution to the problem is to find ways of developing self-esteem.

Bernie Zilbergeld, in his book, *The Shrinking of America*, points out that although psychotherapy in general has only limited effectiveness, his studies led him to believe that psychotherapy does positively affect self-esteem. Improved self-esteem "may be counselling's most important outcome." In other words, what modern psychotherapy has been able to positively achieve so far is only the improvement of self-esteem. This might, in the future too, become the main goal of psychotherapy.

Inferiority Complex

Inferiority complex

Alfred Adler, one of the pioneers of modern psychotherapy, pointed out that the inferiority feeling is at the root of all psychological problems. This inferiority feeling develops in early childhood because children are naturally weaker than adults. In addition, the growing child is bound to meet children who are better than him in certain ways. Therefore, no one escapes feelings of inferiority and envy. All children want to be in the limelight, be the centre of attention, and be accepted. Inferiority means that one is not accepted, one is not in the limelight. Inferiority feelings cause children to feel that they are not fit to be in the limelight, and that, if they were thrown into the limelight, people would discover their inferiority or unfitness and reject them. Of course, they are only rejecting themselves by judging themselves in this way. Yet, not realising this, they shy away from public attention. They begin to shiver when attention is focused on them. This inferiority feeling, when carried into adult life, prevents people from getting ahead in life. This could also lead to any or all of the many varieties of psychological problems mentioned above. Thus no one escapes from psychological problems, it is normal to have them - it is supernatural to be free of them.

People compensate for these inferiority feelings in various ways. One might compensate by trying to achieve greatness in some way or other, good or bad, social or antisocial. One might become a philanthropist, a criminal or a neurotic according to how one compensates. This is also how character is developed, whether good or bad. Withdrawal into neurosis or functional psychosis is an attempt to compensate in an unrealistic way. This unrealistic compensation can also lead to perversions, alcoholism, drug addiction, and even suicide. This is also what makes people turn to crime and war. Good as well as bad can come out of inferiority feelings, depending on how one chooses to deal with them. And no one can escape inferiority feelings.

Buddha's Idea of Personalization

Buddha's idea of personalization

More than twenty-five centuries ago it was Siddhatta Gotama, the Buddha (the Awakened One), who discovered a different way of understanding and solving this same problem of low self-esteem or inferiority complex. He called this problem "*dukkha*," which means, "pain," or discomfort both physical and mental. He saw this as the "discomfort of being," (*bhava dukkha*). The word "being" here refers to "being a self." In other words, this "self-consciousness" or consciousness of being a "self" or having a "personality," is the problem. We tend to personalize and identify ourselves not only with our body and mind, but also with things outside the body, such as our family, our culture, our nation, our job, our financial and social status, our educational qualifications, our achievements, and all such internal and external material and spiritual things that people normally identify with.

This identification is also called "personalization" (*upadana*) in Buddhism. It is through personalization that we acquire a "personal identity," or "personality." To "personalize" is to think and feel, "this is mine." One tends to personalize the body by thinking, "this body is mine." The body becomes a personal property. In the same way one personalizes sensations that arise and pass away in the body. One similarly personalizes perceptions, conceptions, emotions, actions, and consciousness itself, as "mine." One personalizes, not only the body and the mental processes that continue inside the body; one even personalizes external objects, like one's family members, one's ancestry, one's social status, one's job, one's income, one's house, one's car, one's bank account, and many more such things. The sum total of all that has been personalized becomes one's "self." What has been personalized is what one identifies with, and calls "mine" or "myself." Then one's "identity" becomes what one identifies with or personalizes. In other words, the Buddha saw that personality is only a concept, a perspective, which results from personalization of perceived objects such as the body and the mind. It is accompanied by a mental image of how one sees oneself, and is therefore called the "self-image."

Having "personalized" things and having thus created a "self-image," or personality perspective (*sakkayaditthi*), one then begins to compare these "personalized objects" (*upadhi*) with those of others. In other words, having identified one's "self" this way, one begins to compare oneself with other selves (*mana*). Not only does one compare one's body or mind with that of another, one even compares one's social or economic status, one's house, one's car or any other personalized property. By comparing this way, one begins to feel inferior (*hina mana*), superior (*seyya mana*) or equal (*sadisi mana*). This is how the problem of self-esteem begins. Personalization results in a personality, which is seen as one's "self," and this self-consciousness leads to comparison with other such selves, resulting in the low "self-esteem," "inferiority complex," and the whole host of psychological problems described above. They are all the consequence of personalization and the formation of the notion of "self." The painful experiences recounted above are all the result of this personalisation. It may be true that out of all the animals in the world, the human being is the only animal that is aware of a "self." This does not, however, mean that this "self-consciousness" has to be preserved despite its painful consequences.

Personality Perspective

Personality perspective

As mentioned above, the Buddha saw this "personal identity" as a psychopathological burden that we carry throughout life. This "personality perspective" (*sakkaya ditthi*) was seen to be pathological and unhealthy because it is productive of pain

and suffering to oneself as well as to others. It is this "personality perspective" that is responsible for the "identity crisis" described by Erik Erikson. This "identity crisis" is what the Buddha called "uncertainty" (*vicikiccha*), which is the inability to decide what one should identify with. "Uncertainties" like "Who am I now?" "Who was I in the past?" and "What will I be in the future" can arise only if one is conscious of a "self." This "uncertainty" is also the inability to decide whether to take sides with our personalised emotional impulses (*asava*) and become pleasure seekers (*kamasukhallikanuyoga*), or to take sides with our personalised conscience (*hiri ottappa*) and become ascetics (*attakilamatanuyoga*). But asceticism is not better than pleasure seeking. The Buddha saw that asceticism is based on mere suppressive, self-denying vows (*silabbata*) that split the personality and create conflict within. The person who is free from the "personality perspective" is free from uncertainty and self-denying vows. Such individuals are able to successfully eliminate an emotional impulse, because they do not give it power by personalising it. They do not see the impulse as a part of themselves, and therefore can easily let it go.

The solution to the problem of self-esteem, which the Buddha offers, is simple. It is to attack the problem at its root. It is to give up personalising and the measuring. In other words, we have to depersonalise what has been personalised. This is something that people generally hesitate to do. They hate to lose their "self" however unpleasant it may be. To lose the "self," they feel, is to lose 'their very "being" or "existence." They do not realize that their notions of "self," "being," "existence," and "identity" are only pathological concepts, which they have acquired through the personalization of perceived objects. Because we do not generally meet people who have consciously rooted out their "self identity" we think it is abnormal to be without such a "self identity." The absence of a "self identity," does not reify a person or turn a person into a "thing," such as a robot. It only turns a selfish, frightened, defensive, and unhappy person into an unselfish, fearless, cooperative, kind, and happy one. It leads a self-centred person to become interested in the welfare of others, to see that another's pain is as important as one's own. Such a selfless individual does not make a distinction between one-self and others, because to do so is not only to be egoistic and self-centred, but also to be egotistic and selfish.

In Buddhism this conscious removal of the "self identity" is regarded as a hallowed, extraordinary, "supernormal" (*ariya*) condition, which is a superior state of mental health. Because this is not the ordinary human state, it is also seen as a "superhuman" (*uttarimanussa*), transcendent (*lokuttara*), and divine (*brahma*) state. This absence of the notion of "self" is not merely a peculiar Buddhist concept, even Jesus seems to refer to it in the Christian Gospels: "He who loses his self for my sake shall find it" (Mat. 10:39). This concept is also found in Hinduism where enlightenment is seen as the loss of the "individual self" when it merges with the "Universal Self" of God (*Brahma*). This is also the common mystical experience of "at-one-ment" in all theistic religions, where the soul unites with God. If the individual soul unites with the universal soul of God, the individual soul cannot remain separate, just as when a river enters the ocean, it cannot remain as a separate entity.

Depersonalization Disorder

Depersonalization disorder

Although, according to ancient religious thinking, depersonalisation is seen as a healthy activity that transforms a person from a normal to a supernormal state, I am aware that this idea is seen in modern psychiatry as a pathological condition. According to the *Dictionary of Psychology* by Arthur S. Reber (Penguin Books), this term "depersonalisation" represents an emotional disorder in which there is loss of contact with one's personal reality, a *derealization* accompanied by feelings of strangeness and an unreality of experience. In severe cases, parts of one's body feel alien or altered in size and one may have the experience of perceiving oneself from a distance. This condition is called *depersonalization disorder* or *depersonalization neurosis*. The conscious depersonalisation of personality by the Buddhist can easily be confused with the pathological condition mentioned above, although it is quite distinct from the pathological condition in several ways.

This confusion seems to arise due to a staunch belief of the neo-Freudians, in a personal *ego*. It was Paul Schilder (1886-1940) and Paul Federn (1872 - 1950), both Freudians who described the *ego* as the "omnipresent component of consciousness." Paul Schilder identified the *ego* not only as the "thinker" as Decarte did, but also as the feeler, perceiver and actor. "The *ego* thinks, feels, perceives, has a past and present... every experience presupposes an *ego*." (Schlder, P. *Medical Psychology*, pp 290-300, 1953). Paul Federn spoke of a "sense of *ego*" not as something that is perceived specifically but as something that one is generally aware of continuously. Edoardo Weis writing about Federn says, "The sense of *ego* which is omnipresent, is not ordinarily recognized. Yet, variations in intensity of *ego* feeling are a matter of common experience. When tired or drowsy, we feel numb; upon waking from a refreshing sleep, or upon receiving exciting news, we feel an invigorated "sense of *ego*". Federn spoke of an "ego cathexis." This fluctuation of the "sense of *ego*" was explained by means of his theory of "libido cathexis," or emotional investment. What it means is that if the *ego* becomes emotionally interested in an object, there is the experience of the "sense of *ego*." When the *ego* withdraws its interest, the object appears strange. The feeling of depersonalisation, which is described as the "loss of the sense of reality of one's self," is understood to be a similar estrangement, similar to inadequate investment of libido either in the body or in the mind, and can be caused by different emotional reasons."

We do concede that there can be pathological cases of depersonalisation resulting from what the Buddha called "the urge to get rid of existence" (*vibhava tanha*), which is based on a dislike for what exists. These pathological cases of depersonalisation are in fact "unconscious" processes. What we are referring to here is a "conscious" process of depersonalisation based on a full awareness of reality. This conscious depersonalisation is something practiced not only in Buddhism, but also in other religions like Hinduism and even in Christianity as mentioned before. There is, however, a difference in the degree of depersonalisation in the different religions. In Hinduism and Christianity, there is always a subtle "self" that remains, which is called "soul" or "atman." But in Buddhism, there is a radical depersonalisation where nothing remains to identify as a "self."

It is interesting to notice, however, that the pathological case of depersonalising as described by Federn involves the withdrawal of libido cathexis from the object, though unconsciously done by the patient. The Buddhist practice of conscious depersonalisation is quite similar to the above in that it could be seen as a withdrawal of libido cathexis, but this is done consciously. Further, this pathological depersonalisation is not a complete depersonalisation. It is a partial depersonalisation where the ego remains as the subject while the object alone is depersonalised. Edoardo Weiss says on this subject, "The ego may react to an external situation presenting a conflict, by withdrawing itself from the sense organs, thus causing the outer world to be unreal; it may withdraw itself similarly from a body organ, which has become the source of unpleasant sensations, or from some objectionable wish or affect. (Weir, E. *The Principles of Psychodynamics*. NY. Grune and Stratton, 1950).

Complete Depersonalization

Complete depersonalization

It is clear that this unconscious partial depersonalization is the reason for the complaint and the suffering in the pathological condition, as Reber described in his *Dictionary of Psychology*, "feelings of strangeness and unreality of experience. In severe cases, parts of **one's body** feel alien or altered in size and **one** may have the experience of perceiving **oneself** from a distance." (*The **Bolds** are mine, in order to draw attention to the **personalized** subject, and the **depersonalized** object*). Complete depersonalization consciously executed results in freedom from worry and fear because such depersonalization frees one from the "notion of self," which is responsible for all worries and fears. The self-centered mind is always unhappy while the selfless mind is always happy. It is because people prefer to hold on to the "personality perspective" rather than let it go, that they continue to suffer from personality disorders. The few individuals who learn to consciously let go of the "self consciousness" gain freedom from mental sickness and suffering.

Although letting go of the "self identity" sounds like an impossible or at least a very difficult task, it can be achieved. The Buddha did it, and so did all his enlightened disciples. It is what all Buddhists attempt to do in their practice. It involves a sacrifice of what one cherishes most, the feeling of "being." The people who feel their "self" crushed or rejected are the people who hesitate most to let go, they hang on to their "self" and are very defensive. Yet their freedom lies only in letting go of this false "self." This "self" has to be seen as a burden that we are carrying all the time. Freedom is found by letting go of the burden. In Buddhism, this letting go of the "self" is called "laying down the burden." Probably this was what Jesus meant when he said, "Come unto me those who are heavy laden, and I shall give you rest."

The Buddha not only saw that this "self identity" has to be eradicated from our thoughts, feelings and behaviour, but he also discovered the technique of doing so. This technique is what He taught as the Supernormal Eight-fold Way (*ariya atthangika magga*), the eight constituents of which are as follows:

1. **Harmonious perspective**
2. **Harmonious orientation**
3. **Harmonious speech**
4. **Harmonious action**
5. **Harmonious life style**
6. **Harmonious practice**
7. **Harmonious attention**
8. **Harmonious equilibrium**

This technique begins with the Harmonious Perspective, which is a perspective free of self-centred or selfish thinking, where self-consciousness disappears, because it is not supported by self-centred emotions. Such a mind is calm and tranquil, free of conflict both internal and external. It is also kind and compassionate, thinking of "all" instead of "I" and "you." This is a paradigm shift within a person, which brings about peace and harmony within and without.

The Harmonious Perspective

The Harmonious perspective

This Harmonious Perspective results from an understanding of the fundamental problem of existence, and its solution. Before we can find a solution, the cause of the problem should be understood. The solution then is the removal of the cause, but a method has to be adopted to remove the cause. The Buddha, along with modern psychologists, especially the Freudians, was aware that the problem we are faced with is a **conflict between our self-centered blind emotions and reality**, which has two parts: the inner and the outer. The outer conflict is the familiar conflict between our emotions and the reality of impermanence around us; for example, the impermanence of life itself, ending in death, or the mere change in our pleasant relationships in parting from our loved ones, or meeting the unavoidable devastating effects of a tornado, an earthquake, or even of war. The inner conflict is the conflict between our blind emotions and our reason, which is aware of the impermanent reality around us. It is a conflict between two parts of our own mind, **emotion** and **reason**.

When emotion and reason are in conflict, emotion always tends to win. Emotion is powerful but blind. Reason is weak though intelligent. Yet intelligence can be more successful than brute power. It is true that emotions have helped the lower animals to some extent, in defending themselves from danger, and in the continuation of their species, although it is not the best defense, for we see its failure when we see a lion chasing the deer. The human beings, however, have a better tool for this purpose. This tool is what distinguishes the human being from all other animals. It is the human intelligence, which has helped humankind through out history to tide through the troubles and tribulations of life, despite its imperfections. The

imperfection in the intelligence, when seriously considered, appears to be the result of blind emotions interfering with proper thinking.

Emotions have been to mankind a nagging vestige carried forward from an earlier evolutionary stage, like the appendix, which has to be removed or kept under the control of the later developed but more effective intelligence. It is when emotion plays a dominant role that all psychopathic problems arise.

In seeking the way to gain control over emotions, it is important to understand that the human mind is not an entity separate from the body. It is the subjective experience of the activity of the body itself. It is the result of the activity of the nervous system. What we commonly call the mind is mainly two parts of this activity: the cognitive and the affective, which is subjectively experienced as reason and emotion, which often come in conflict and create our problem.

The immature child or adult is dominated by emotion to a great extent, whereas the mature adult is mostly dominated by reason. Psychotherapy is an effort to make an immature person become mature. The reality of the immature person, which is influenced by emotion, is quite different from that of the mature one. The mature mind can think more clearly, because it is less hindered by emotions. The harmonious perspective is therefore a mature perspective.

The modern cognitive psychologists are becoming aware of the importance of developing the cognitive process. They have understood that the cognitive process does not have to fight with the affective process because the cognitive process is already in control of the affective process. It is the cognitive process that is responsible for the bad behaviour of the affective process. This is why cognitive therapy deals with the cognitive process in order to correct the affective activity. In other words the emotions are corrected by correcting the rational faculty. This is why the Buddha started with the Harmonious Perspective. This was why even Sigmund Freud pointed out that “where the *id* is, there shall be the *ego*.”

Both the Buddha as well as Freud saw that emotions or the affective process comes in conflict with reason or the cognitive process. Freud spoke of it terms of the *id* coming in conflict with the *ego*. Reason is aware of the reality around, and therefore wants to be in tune with reality, while blind emotion is only interested in expressing itself in action, to obtain immediate gratification. This is why the child and the neurotic, who are dominated mainly by emotions, acts emotionally rather than rationally.

The Buddha saw a solution to this conflict not through suppression, repression, or sublimation. His method was to understand that emotion is a physical disturbance created by thinking. If we learn to correct our thinking, the mind becomes free from emotional disturbance. Such a mind is calm and tranquil. This tranquil mind is the healthy and happy mind. Such a mind is neither normal nor abnormal. It is **Supernormal** because perfect tranquillity is not a normal phenomenon. The aim of the Buddha was **Perfect Imperturbability Of Mind**, at all times. The tranquil mind is free of self-centred emotions. Therefore, it is not only dominated by reason, it is also free of the “sense of self.” Tranquillity depersonalizes the personality. It is only when this depersonalization has been perfected cognitively, that the tranquillity will remain. Otherwise, the mind can get disturbed again and the tranquillity is lost. Therefore, while in the tranquil state, the depersonalization must be consciously perfected. We may not be able to attain to that ideal state immediately, but every step taken in that direction brings one to a greater level of happiness, the problem being solved gradually to a greater and greater degree. In other words, the solution grows in degrees.

[The Fourfold Sublime Reality](#)

Fourfold Sublime Reality

Harmonious perspective, in short, is becoming aware of the problem and its solution. It is in making this paradigm shift that the therapist can help. The rest is the work of the patient, which often automatically follows. The therapist acts as a teacher rather than a doctor, and the patient becomes a student. The Buddha presented the problem and its solution, in the form of the **Fourfold Sublime Reality**.

The Fourfold Sublime Reality

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. The problem | -Conflict between emotions and reality |
| 2. The cause | -The blind emotions |
| 3. The solution | -Elimination of blind emotions |
| 4. The method | -The Sublime Eightfold Way |

This reality is supernormal because it is not the reality of the normal or the abnormal person. It is a reality that rises above the normal to a supernormal level, though it is quite accessible. Yet one has to gain access to it in degrees. Therefore it has to be described in relation to four main levels of development as follows:

Levels of Development

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Cognitive Reorientation | -changing our sense of values |
| 2. Expansion of Heart | -sincerely helping others |
| 3. Tranquillity of mind | -learning how to relax and be calm |
| 4. Paradigm Shift | -depersonalizing the self |

Having understood the Harmonious Perspective, it is possible to see how a problem such as “low self esteem” can be solved through this technique.

Level 1 - Cognitive Reorientation

1. The first level of development - Cognitive Reorientation

At this level we consider the sense of values. Our judgement of superiority or inferiority depends on our sense of values. For example, if I think that financial prosperity is of great value, I will begin to feel inferior when I meet a person who is richer than me. If I do not think so, I will not feel inferior. If I think that having a university degree is of great value, I will feel inferior when I meet someone who has a degree higher than mine. If I think that physical height is of great value, I will feel inferior when I meet a person taller than me. Our feeling of inferiority or low self-esteem depends on our sense of values. Therefore the problem is solved at this level by changing our sense of values.

Level 2 - Expansion of Heart

2. The second level of development – Expansion of Heart

At this level we consider the expansion of heart. When we become interested in others, we stop worrying about our superiority or inferiority. We realize that these feelings of inferiority are present in everyone, even great kings and emperors. What is important is to help the needy, and be concerned for the welfare of all humanity, and even animals and plants. Such thoughts dissolve the feelings of low self-esteem. Our hearts become broad. Only narrow minds feel inferior.

Level 3 - Tranquillity of Mind

3. The third level of development – Tranquillity of Mind

At this level we consider the importance of calmness. We learn to relax the body and calm the mind. We learn to calm the emotions instead of fighting, suppressing or repressing them. We learn that emotions are controlled by mental images. We can learn to change our mental images and maintain calming images in the mind. We walk calmly, work calmly, talk calmly, and think calming thoughts. We avoid emotional thoughts as far as we can. Even if we become emotional by accident, we know how to regain our composure and return to calmness quickly. This way, thoughts of inferiority never enter our minds. We are not concerned about inferiority or superiority at all.

Level 4 - Paradigm Shift

4. The fourth level of development – Paradigm Shift

This is the level of impersonality. This is a very high level. It is at this level that we learn to depersonalise all that has been personalised as “mine.” By cultivating calmness of mind, we have seen how thoughts of “self” disappears when the mind is fully tranquil. We know that the self-consciousness is a result of tensions in the body and emotional excitement. We are fully convinced that there is no real “self” to talk about. We understand that the idea of “self” arises from personalisation. Although we understand that there is no true “self,” yet thoughts of “self” spring up by habit. So we try to overcome the habit by constantly watching the mind for pop-ups and dwelling on depersonalising thoughts:

Depersonalising thoughts

- (1) *My body is dependent on conditions*
- (2) *What is dependent is unstable*
- (3) *What is unstable is not as I want*
- (4) *What is not as I want is painful*
- (5) *What is not as I want, and is painful, is not under my power*
- (6) *What is not under my power cannot be “mine”*
- (7) *What is not mine cannot be “me” or my “self.”*

Insight Meditation

Insight meditation

We think in the same way, regarding every part of the personality. When we have been able to depersonalise the total personality, the thought “I am” does not arise as a real fact. When the thought “I am” is absent, how can there be the thought “I am inferior?” This is how the harmonious perspective can put an end to all troubles described above. Yet this depersonalisation has to be done in degrees, according to different levels of progress.

When this Buddhist meditation, as taught by the Buddha, is practiced, one begins to see oneself as an impersonal process, which is really the modern scientific perspective, although this perspective does not play a dominant role in any scientist’s mind, in normal life. This unfortunate condition has been called, “cognitive dissonance.” This dissonance is because we are governed by habits of thought, just as a computer is governed by the software. Yet it is possible to overcome wrong habits of thought by consciously cultivating right habits of thought. It has to be done through constant repetition of right thoughts in the mind. This means, this harmonious perspective has to be reflected upon day and night by constant repetition. This is the meaning of **insight meditation** in Buddhism.

This is how one depersonalises what has been personalized. This depersonalisation in thought (*ditthi*) has to penetrate into one's feelings (*sankappa*), and behaviour in the form of speech, (*vaca*) and action (*kammanta*) and one's whole life style (*ajiva*). This can happen only by constant practice (*vayama*), or repetition of this way of thinking. This means paying constant introverted attention (*satipatthana*) to one's thoughts, feelings, speech, action, and life. When this is done, one regains one's lost mental equilibrium (*samadhi*). When this equilibrium is successfully attained, followed by proper insight into the reality of impersonality, one gets disinterested (*nibbindati*) in one’s personality, being disinterested, one becomes dispassionate (*virajjati*), being dispassionate, one is freed from the “delusion of existence” as a “self” (*vimuchchati*).

Regaining the Mental Equilibrium

Regaining the mental equilibrium

Our problem is that we have lost our mental equilibrium, because of our reaction to the environmental stimulation of our senses. We not only react, we also personalize the reaction, thinking “I react.” Then we begin to experience the instability of what has been personalized. Our mind is then shaken by the changing vicissitudes of life. If, on the other hand, we depersonalise what has been personalized, our mind is not shaken any more by whatever happens to the impersonal phenomena. Thus we regain our mental equilibrium.

This "self identity" or "notion of self" is indeed a tragedy because it carries with it all the miseries of life. We can turn our life into a joyful comedy by gaining freedom from this "delusion of self." This makes Buddhism a very optimistic way of thought, though some writers have mistakenly called it pessimism. Freedom from "self" is **not death**; on the contrary, it is the **freedom from death**. When there is no "self" who is there to die? Obviously, this loss of "self" is the only way to perfect happiness, however fearful it may look. It is also the only true way to **immortality**, which all religions ultimately seek.

This is the Buddhist idea of awakening from the "dream of existence." Of course, this process of depersonalization is not a sudden occurrence. It is a gradual process of growth and evolution. How long it takes depends on the individual's level of maturity in terms of readiness to give up the pleasure principle and accept the reality of impersonality. According to the Buddha, an intelligent and serious meditator can reach perfection in seven years the maximum. Some may take much longer. Yet some have done it in seven days, and very few overnight. The important point, however, is that every step one advances, a greater degree of happiness one experiences in life.

This teaching of the Buddha is worthy of special study by modern psychologists. Such a study could end up in a major break through in the field of psychotherapy.

It is interesting to note that modern psychiatrists and psychotherapists have been nicknamed "shrink" by Americans, because they are being compared to the Native American medicine men of old. It is believed that the ancient medicine men could, by some method, shrink the heads of their enemies, after killing them, and preserve them as trophies. This "head shrinking," however, can be given a more laudable interpretation in relation to Buddhist psychotherapy. A properly carried out psychotherapy, according to the Buddha, could be seen as a deflation of a person's "ego," which is head-shrinking. The removal of the delusion of "self" can be seen as a deflation of the "ego" of a person.

This Buddhist approach to psychotherapy is a deflation carried to its ultimate end. This form of therapy does not merely make abnormal people normal; it makes normal people "supernormal." This means that Buddhist psychotherapy is a radical therapy, and that the Buddha becomes the "Radical Shrink."

THE END

** Venerable Dr. Punnaji is a Sri Lankan monk of the Theravada tradition. He studied modern science and western medicine in Sri Lanka and obtained two doctorates while in the United States, one in western psychology and another in western philosophy & comparative religion.*

Venerable has made an in-depth research into the original teachings of the Buddha, which he believes is different from all the schools of Buddhism. He also did research into the form of Buddhist psychotherapy, which he thinks is the best way to introduce Buddhism to the modern world. Buddhism in its original form, was not a mere religion of faith and worship, but a psychological technique of growth and evolution of the human consciousness. Venerable travels regularly in the west sharing the Dhamma in the United States, Canada and Europe.

Meditation
ARIYAMAGGA BHAVANA

Instructor

Ven. Mahathera M. Punnaji

MEDITATION GUIDE/RETREAT

This form of meditation is based on the original teachings of the Buddha as it is found in the Pali Sutta Pitaka. It is conducted at three retreat levels:

(1) Beginner	Selective Thinking (<i>anussati</i>)
(2) Intermediate	Cultivation of Tranquility (<i>sammappadhāna</i>)
(3) Advanced	Awakening from the dream of existence (<i>satta bojjhanga</i>)

[Bhante Punnaji's Recommendation](#)

Bhante Punnaji's Recommendation

Bhante Punnaji's secular education and training as a medical doctor and later earning two doctorates has equipped him to be well-versed in modern fields of scientific knowledge including medicine, philosophy, psychology and a thorough understanding of comparative religions.

He always advocates that meditation is the only way to walk the footsteps of the Buddha. Based on his vast experience and knowledge, he came out with this meditation guide – ARIYAMAGGA BHAVANA (The Sublime Eightfold Way) using the original teachings of the Buddha, as found in the Pali Sutta Pitaka.

This meditation guide mostly explains on meditation level 1 – Selective Thinking (*anussathi*) which readers will find simple and easy to understand. Bhante uses this meditation guide to teach the yogis during retreats conducted at our Buddhist Maha Vihara. It can also be used as a daily living guide.

Emphasis is placed on eradicating the self-centered emotions which not only pollute our minds but our health too. The aim of the retreat is to purify the mind. By purifying the mind, we become good, happy and wise. It begins with a paradigm shift followed by goal reorientation. The paradigm shift is from a consciousness of existence to a consciousness of experience.

[Introduction](#)

Introduction

The aim of this retreat is to purify the mind. We are all used to taking a physical bath to clean and cool the body. After the bath we feel fresh and comfortable. It is very rarely, however, or even never do we get the opportunity to clean our minds in the same way. We tend to carry into adult life the dirt we have been accumulating since our infancy, and probably we even carry accretions from our former lives.

Therefore the reason for our meditation is clear: — by purifying the mind we become GOOD, HAPPY, AND WISE. The individual creates society, and society creates the world. Therefore, we begin with the individual, and that is: -- YOU. The impurities to be eradicated are the self-centred emotions, which the Buddha called lust (*lobha*), hate (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*), the sense of 'self', which is the basis of all selfishness.

These emotions not only pollute our minds, but they also interfere with our physical health. This problem is what is today called **STRESS**. Emotions have been useful for some lower animals for the preservation of life and the propagation of the species. But the human beings have a better tool for that purpose, which is **intelligence**. Intelligence is the one distinctive faculty that makes the human being stand out among all other animals.

It is this human intelligence that is responsible for all the scientific inventions and discoveries of the modern world. It is this same intelligence, which when further evolved, brings about the solution of the problem of existence. Yet lack of intelligence, or the wrong use of intelligence in catering to our self-centred emotions, can lead to all the crimes, terrorism,

and even wars, as they exist in the world today. In fact, it was to develop this special human intelligence and to put it to better beneficial use, for the sake of all mankind that the Buddha set out to propagate his Glorious Gospel.

Sometimes we hear people raising doubts, when we speak of purifying the mind. This doubt is partly due to certain concepts prevalent in the West. Some Western religious beliefs and some concepts in Western psychology and biology seem to contradict this idea of purification of mind.

Some Western religions have maintained that human beings can never be pure, for only God is pure. There is also a common saying in the West, "To err is human, but to forgive is divine". This seems to imply that human beings can become pure only through the forgiveness of sins by God, and not through a transformation of the character of the individual. In addition, there has been a historical reason for this Western attitude of mind. A religious community called Puritans, who were also supposed to purify the mind, had created some negative feelings in Western society.

Some modern Western psychologists, such as Sigmund Freud, have thought that emotions are natural and instinctual, and that emotional arousal is built into our system, and therefore emotion cannot be eliminated. Even modern biological thinking seems to support this concept. Biologists think that emotion is necessary for the preservation of life in animals, including humans.

Although Freud thought that these emotions are built into our system as instincts, he was also aware that emotions are the result of the reaction of our body to stimulation by the environment. This reaction is a chain reaction, a flowing in, or an influx. Therefore emotion can also be seen as the result of an influence (*asava*) of the environment on the organism. This means, it is not an instinct, nor is it something that is naturally born in the body like hunger or thirst. This is why most modern psychologists today do not regard these emotions as instincts.

In fact Eric Fromm, a modern psychoanalyst, has pointed out that Freud always said, "where there is the *id* there shall be the *ego*," which means that Freud had the intention of eliminating the self-centred emotions, as he was aware that the emotions were the cause of trouble, and that instead of the emotions dominating the personality, reason should begin to dominate. This was also what Daniel Goleman, the psychologist seemed to point out, in his recent book entitled *Emotional Intelligence*, though he did not hope to eliminate the emotions altogether, for he pointed out the need for emotions.

It was the Buddha, more than twenty five centuries earlier in the East, who showed the way to attain a perfectly pure mind, by eliminating the emotions altogether. Many of his disciples achieved this mental purity, through the natural human technique taught by the Buddha. This wonderful occurrence was based on the principle mentioned in this oft quoted passage from the Buddha:

"The mind is essentially pure; it is polluted by adventitious impurities. Ignorance of this fact prevents people from purifying their minds", and so obtain freedom from the miserable insecurity of life. (*Ang.I.2*).

This means, the mind can obviously be compared to water. For water is a pure substance, which gets polluted due to foreign matter falling into it. It is due to the water being a pure substance that it can be purified by filtration or distillation, even though water is never found in a pure form naturally. In the same way, the mind can also be purified, because it is essentially pure, provided we know the proper technique, and the mind too can never be found in its pure form normally.

It is this **saving technique of the Buddha** that you will learn during this retreat. This technique was the original form of Buddhist meditation taught by the Buddha, which is found in the Sutta Pitaka. The method of meditation used in this beginners retreat, is explained in the *Dvedhā vitakka Sutta*, which is given in translation at the end of this booklet.

Of course there are some critics who say that the Buddha did not eliminate emotions altogether because he cultivated positive emotions like *metta*, *karuna*, *mudita*, and *upekkha*. Yet it is important to understand that there are no positive emotions, according to Western psychologists like Sigmund Freud, or even according to the Buddha. The so called positive emotions like *metta*, known as the "divine dwelling" (*brahma vihara*) is not an emotion, but a selfless state of mind, which appears in perfect form only in the absence of the self-centred emotions: lust (*lobha*), hate (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*), where delusion is the "sense of self" (*atta*) or sense of "existence" (*bhava*). This means, only the emancipated supernormal individuals (*arahant*) experience genuine selfless universal benevolence (*metta*).

[Selective Thinking as Meditation](#)

Selective Thinking

Selective Thinking as Meditation

Meditation will be understood during this beginner's retreat as **selective thinking**, which is choosing the thoughts we think, instead of thinking whatever thought that enters the mind. This means, we must constantly watch the thoughts that enter the mind and very scrupulously choose between good and bad thoughts. Normally thoughts come into our minds quite unconsciously, and most of them are emotional. Very often we are even carried away by these emotional thoughts. The moment we become conscious of them, however, they stop. This is because emotional thoughts can run only unconsciously, and they cannot continue consciously. Therefore the moment we become conscious of them, they must naturally stop.

This is the fact on which modern psychoanalysis is based. The aim of psychoanalysis is to make the unconscious thoughts become conscious. This making of the unconscious emotions conscious seems to be what Daniel Goleman called

“emotional intelligence”. It is also the fact on which the technique of the Buddha was originally based. The aim of the meditation called *satipatthana* is to become conscious of our unconscious emotional reactions. If we are unconsciously carried away by our emotional thoughts, we remain not only unconscious but also unhappy. This is what we call worry and day dreaming.

Meditation, as we practice it, therefore, is being awake to and noting the thoughts that come into our mind. It is also consciously selecting the thoughts we think: avoiding the emotional thoughts and developing the calming thoughts. This means, we must always be conscious of our unconscious emotional thoughts that habitually come into our minds. By doing so we stop all unconscious emotional thoughts, and we start thinking only consciously and rationally.

We learn to overcome old habits of unconscious emotional thinking, and we learn to consciously cultivate new habits of calm thinking. Cultivating a new habit, however, means practice, and practice means repetition, which must be maintained throughout. It is like learning to type or to play a musical instrument.

This means, the kind of meditation that we practice is not an exercise in concentration, but an exercise in wakefulness, and selective thinking. It is not sitting like a statue for twenty minutes or even one hour in the morning, and probably followed similarly in the evening. Selective thinking has to be done every moment in our waking lives, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. Of course, during this retreat, we do not recommend meditating lying down during the day, because you may fall asleep. At night, however, you can meditate lying down, but when you fall asleep at night, expect to start walking the moment you are awake. This meditation has to be practiced all the time during your retreat, even at night, no matter what posture you are in.

This means, we have to make a serious decision to change our way of thinking, and be willing to cultivate a new way of thinking by repeated practice.

“Sow a thought and reap a habit
Sow a habit and reap a character
Sow a character and reap a destiny”

If we maintain this conscious awareness of thoughts that come into our minds, and practice selective thinking, we overcome the habit of worrying and being unconscious, and we cultivate the habit of being conscious and happy all the time. This leads to the gradual development of consciousness until we awaken from the dream of existence, like the Buddha, whereby all suffering is brought to an end.

There is nothing strenuous about this meditation unless one begins to concentrate. There is no concentration in this form of meditation. Concentration is a strenuous effort. Our aim is to stop concentration, and to keep our mind vacant and calm, and the body relaxed. This is not an easy job either, because there is a natural tendency of the mind to unconsciously concentrate on the past or the future and become emotionally agitated. It is this habit that we are trying to overcome.

There is one important rule, however, that must be carried out whatever be the posture you are in, and that is to **keep your back straight**. This helps in keeping the **mind awake**. If one wants to gain any benefit from this meditation, one has to practice it conscientiously throughout the retreat and possibly even after. It is by constant practice of right thinking that a real transformation and growth can take place in our lives.

Unfortunately our blind emotions are dominating our lives. As children we are mainly dominated by emotions. As we begin to grow up into adulthood, we begin to think more intelligently, but this intelligence is mainly used to gratify our emotions rather than to guide our emotions. When we are adults, even though our intelligence begins to decide what is right and wrong, often when our emotions are excited and strong, we tend to be carried away by our emotions, rather than by our intelligence. Very often we use our intelligence to judge others than to judge ourselves. This dominance of emotions prevents us from acting rationally all the time. We even break the five precepts, which we value very much, when we are dominated by emotions.

Harmonious Perspective **Selective Thinking**

Harmonious Perspective

What can save us from this plight is the **Harmonious Perspective** (*samma ditthi*). This special perspective is to become conscious of the unconscious mental processes that go on as impersonal mental processes dependent on conditions. This is to understand the problem and its solution, without assuming the notion of “self”. This resolves the cognitive dissonance between emotion and reason, and brings about a **cognitive consonance**, by means of a **Harmonious Sense of Values** (*saddha*), which begins to guide our lives, and transform our character by means of a **Harmonious Goal Reorientation** (*samma sankappa*), by directing our minds towards the **Harmonious Goal of Life**, which is **NIRVANA**, the **Imperturbable Serenity of Mind**.

The **Harmonious Sense of Values** is to understand the distinction between good and bad, in terms of **happiness** and **unhappiness**. It is to understand that **good** is what brings happiness to oneself and others, while **bad** is what brings unhappiness to oneself and others. This resolves the conflict between the **desire to be happy** and the **desire to be good**, the conflict that causes **vacillation** of mind or cognitive dissonance (*vicikicca*). The desire to be happy is the desire to be

carried away by emotions and express the emotions. The desire to be good is to be guided by the thinking part of the mind, and desire to suppress the emotions.

The conflict is because happiness is seen as expression of desire, and goodness is seen as suppression of desires, therefore to be good is to be unhappy, and to be happy is to be not good. This way of thinking leads to the question, “Should I be happy and bad, or should I be good and unhappy?” This is vacillation cognitive dissonance (*vicikicca*). This conflict is between emotion and reason, the emotions pulling in one direction, and reason pulling in another direction. It is emotion in conflict with reason.

This conflict is resolved, however, by the two desires finding union and satisfaction in **tranquility** of mind (*samadhi*) and **relaxation** of the body (*passaddhi*), because this tranquility makes one happy as well as good. This is the medial path shown by the Buddha between the pursuit of pleasure and the pursuit of discipline. This was why the Buddha said, “**There is no happiness apart from the Dhamma**” (*sukhaṃ ca na vīna dhammaṃ*).

This explains why the Buddha introduced his teaching as the way to end **unhappiness**, rather than the way to end **evil**. The way to end evil might look like trying to suppress our emotions to be good, and the suppression of emotions looks like unhappiness. This is why religiosity and ascetism is commonly seen as “self torture”. If, instead of talking about self discipline that people seem to deride, we begin to talk about happiness that is derived, not from expression of emotions, but from relaxation of the body and tranquility of the mind. Then being good becomes the same thing as being happy. Now happiness is seen as relaxation of body and tranquility of mind. This kind of happiness is a return to the original equilibrium that was lost.

If we examine a baby in a happy mood, we observe that the body is relaxed and the mind is calm. The moment the baby begins to cry, the body is tensed and the mind is disturbed. This shows that the original state is the calm state, and not the disturbed state. As we grow up and begin to go through life, we are disturbed by many favorable as well as unfavorable circumstances. This disturbance is a reaction of the organism to environmental stimulation where we lose our original equilibrium quite unconsciously. We do not even know how to return to the original state then. Often we even begin to enjoy this disturbance. We do not realize the extent to which begin to suffer as a result. Today the modern psychologists call this **stress**. It was this suffering that the Buddha called *dukkha* and showed the way out of it, by returning to the original equilibrium, NIBBANA.

The Two Extremes

Selective Thinking

The Two Extremes

This was also why the Buddha pointed out that the two extremes to be avoided are:

1. **Unconscious Expression** of emotions
2. **Unconscious Suppression** or repression of emotions

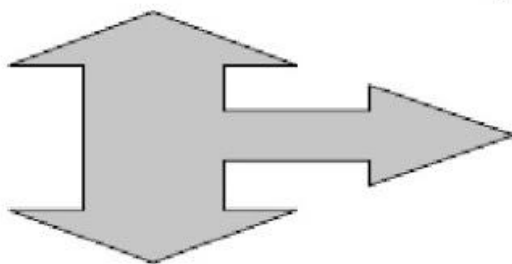
Instead, the medial way was: –

Conscious Relaxation of the body and Tranquility of mind (*passaddhi – samadhi*)

Resulting in: –

The imperturbable serenity of mind (*NIRVANA*)

Unconscious Emotional Expression



**Conscious Relaxation
And
Tranquility of Mind**

Unconscious Emotional Suppression

It is also important to understand that the cause, of all our unhappiness and our feeling of insecurity in the world, is our blind emotions (*tanha*). Therefore the bad thoughts we must get rid of are the self-centered emotional thoughts that come in the form of lust, hate, and the notion of “self”.

These emotions also come in the form of the “five emotional disturbances” (*panca nivarana*):

- (1) Craving for sensual pleasures (*kamacchanda*)
- (2) Anger (*vyapada*)
- (3) Despair and Depression (*thina midda*)
- (4) Anxiety and Worry (*uddhacca kukkuccha*)
- (5) Vacillation of mind / Cognitive Dissonance (*vicikicca*).

Emotions are disturbances of the mind and body that cause physical tension, and make one uncomfortable and unhappy. Good thoughts, on the other hand, are the peaceful rational thoughts that relax the body, calm the mind, and make one comfortable and happy. Emotions are also unconsciously activated, while good thoughts are consciously thought out. Therefore selective thinking is the replacement of unconscious bad thoughts with conscious good thoughts. It is substituting good thoughts for bad thoughts. It is simply cultivating the habit of good thinking.

[Thought Discrimination](#)

Selective Thinking

Thought Discrimination

Following is a list of good thoughts in contrast with bad thoughts. The bad thoughts are mainly the five emotional disturbances (*nivarana*), and the good thoughts are mainly the opposites of these disturbances. As we begin meditation, the good thoughts are practiced in reference to the Buddha, Dhamma, and the Sangha. Next we learn to cultivate the good thoughts by repeated practice of good thoughts while avoiding bad thoughts.

Thought Discrimination

BAD THOUGHTS (<i>micca sankappa</i>)	GOOD THOUGHTS (<i>samma sankappa</i>)
Emotional Thoughts	Calming Thoughts
Passion (<i>raga</i>)	Dispassion (<i>viraga</i>)
Hatred (<i>vyapada</i>)	Compassion (<i>metta</i>)
Worry (<i>kukkuecca</i>)	Rapture (<i>piti</i>)
Agitation (<i>uddhaacca</i>)	Equilibrium (<i>samadhi</i>)
Existential Thinking (<i>bhava</i>)	Experiential Thinking (<i>dhamma</i>)

Meaning of Good Thoughts

DISPASSION: is the opposite of passion. Passion is an emotional reaction to a pleasant sensation, which is also an emotional excitement. It occurs unconsciously, depending on conditions. It occurs only when the necessary conditions are present. Passion is also self-centred and possessive. It leads to conflict and unhappiness. Dispassion, on the other hand, is the absence of emotional excitements. It relaxes the body, and calms the mind. It makes one comfortable, peaceful, and happy. It is unselfish, self sacrificing, and is interested in the welfare of others.

COMPASSION: is to be interested in the welfare of all beings, without making a distinction between oneself, and others. It recognizes that other's happiness or unhappiness is as important as one's own. Compassion broadens the mind, resulting in freedom from self-centredness, worry and unhappiness.

HAPPINESS: is distinct from pleasure. Pleasure is a sensation arising from stimulation of the senses, and is accompanied by tension and emotional excitement. It is a disturbance of the body and mind. True happiness, on the other hand, is the absence of emotional excitement. It is also unselfish, while pleasure is self-centred. Happiness is a selfless freedom from worries and anxieties. It is a pleasant state of undisturbed, relaxed, calm, peaceful, happiness.

TRANQUILLITY: is a state of relaxation of the body and calmness of mind, due to the absence of emotional disturbances. It is a peaceful stillness of mind, which is conducive to clarity of thought, and the gaining of insight into the realities of life.

IN-SIGHT: is the introspective awareness of the inner mental process. When the calm and tranquil mind is turned inwards, it becomes aware of what is going on within. It becomes aware of the unconscious reaction of the body to environmental stimulation of the senses. The reaction is seen in its four stages: perception, conception, emotion, and action. This stops the unconscious reaction, because the unconscious reaction cannot continue while it is conscious. The mind has become conscious of the unconscious process; the determinism of the experience is seen, resulting in seeing the instability, insecurity, and impersonality of the experience. This means the absence of a self or personality is understood. Then one knows that the "Experience", which is determined by conditions, is all there is. The objective "world" and the subjective "self" are but products of this impersonal experience of perception. This "experience" of "existence" is seen to be unstable, insecure and impersonal, and therefore not desirable. This "under-standing" is "in-sight".

Therefore introspective awareness leads to dispassion, which leads to compassion, which leads to happiness, which leads to tranquillity, which leads to introspection, which leads to understanding of what is inside, which is in-sight. Insight begins the cyclical sequence again. And so the mind continues recycling this way until it is fully awakened from "the dream of existence".

Progress in Meditation Consists of Four Steps

PROGRESS IN MEDITATION CONSISTS OF FOUR STEPS

1. **Association with those mature in spirit** (*sappurisa sevana*) – This is a person who is aware of the fourfold reality of life taught by the Buddha.
2. **Hearing the Dhamma** (*saddhamma savana*) – This is hearing about the Fourfold Reality: Problem of Existence, its Cause, its Solution, and the Technique of solving it
3. **Deterministic-thinking** (*yoniso manasikara*) – Changing from existential to experiential thinking, based on the teaching about impersonality (*anatta*) and Contingent Concurrence (*paticca samuppada*)
4. **Reorientation of one's life to solve the problem** (*dhammanudhamma patipatti*) – This begins the Revolution of the Wheel of Experience (*Dhamma cakkha pavattana*).

The revolution of the wheel of experience is an inner transformation of the character of an individual. It is achieved by changing the eight constituents of the character structure, by following the Sublime Eightfold Way. It is a transformation from a self-centred character, to a selfless one.

This **Sublime Eightfold Way** begins with a **paradigm shift** followed by a **goal reorientation**. From this point onwards, it is a matter of moving towards the new goal, which is a return to the original state of equilibrium that was lost. This return to equilibrium is called **homeostasis**.

The paradigm shift is from a consciousness of **existence** (*bhava*) to a consciousness of **experience** (*dhamma*). In other words, it is a change from an awareness of “self” (*atta*) to an awareness of “no self” (*anatta*).

With this comes the understanding that it is the blind self-centred emotions that create the notion of “self”. “Self” is not a rational concept. When this has been understood by our reason, we decide not to be carried away by emotion any more, but to be standing on reason always. This is the goal reorientation, which means we try to stay calm and relaxed under all conditions, instead of being emotional. This reorientation gradually ends up in a return to the original equilibrium, which is homeostasis. Once arrived at this equilibrium by understanding of the problem and its solution, the mind will never be disturbed again. This equilibrium to which one returns, which can never be disturbed, is the “Imperturbable Serenity” – NIRVANA.

The Wheel of Experience

THE WHEEL OF EXPERIENCE (DHAMMA CAKKHA)

This comes in the form of The Sublime Eightfold Way, as follows:

1. Harmonious Perspective
2. Harmonious Orientation
3. Harmonious Speech
4. Harmonious Action
5. Harmonious Life style
6. Harmonious Exercise
7. Harmonious Attention
8. Harmonious Equilibrium

In the beginner's retreat we mainly focus on the first five steps in the Sublime Eightfold Way. This means we focus on the Harmonious Perspective, the Harmonious Orientation, the harmonious speech, action, and life of the individual meditator. Yet the other aspects of the Sublime Eightfold Way are partly used.



1. **Harmonious Perspective**, which leads to
 2. **Dispassion**, which leads to
 3. **Compassion**, which leads to
 4. **Happiness**, which leads to
 5. **Tranquillity**, which leads to
 6. **In-sight**, becoming aware of the unconscious reaction
 7. **Leading to further dispassion**, beginning the cycle again.
- This is how the gradual process of growth or evolution of consciousness takes place, leading to **Awakening from the Dream of Existence** (*sambodhi*).

Recollections

STAGE I: RECOLLECTIONS (ANUSSATI)

Reflect on:

- (A). BUDDHA – who became perfect in purity of mind.
- (B). DHAMMA – the technique of purification
- (C). SANGHA – the followers of the way to perfection
- (D). YOURSELF (a beginner on the way.)

We begin by cultivating good thoughts:

- (1) Awareness of the realities of life,
- (2) Dispassion,
- (3) Compassion,
- (4) Happiness,
- (5) Tranquillity,
- (6) In-sight into impersonality

At first, we consider these states of mind in concrete form as attributes of THE BUDDHA. Next we reflect on the nature of these attributes in abstract form as DHAMMA. Next we consider these attributes in imperfect and perfect form as present in the SANGHA, in variable degrees. They are also present within ONESELF in imperfect form, which is in the process of development.

Recollection of the Buddha

STAGE I: RECOLLECTIONS (ANUSSATI)

RECOLLECTION OF THE BUDDHA (BUDDHANUSSATI)

When reflecting on the BUDDHA, we should think of his attributes: dispassion (*viraga*), compassion (*metta, karuna*), happiness (*mudita*), and introspective tranquillity (*upekkha*), because he depicts these attributes in concrete form.

Dispassion

Born in a royal family destined to become a Righteous Global Emperor (*cakkavatti raja*), according to soothsayers, he gave up his beautiful wife, his newborn son, and even his loving father and entered the life of an ascetic, living in the forest, devoted to meditation. This was his great dispassionate renunciation.

What made him do this was the fact that he saw the realities of life: birth, old age, disease, and death, when he experienced the four pre-cognitions: an old person, a sick person, a corpse, and a renouncer. Then the Harmonious Perspective partially dawned on him, which means he obtained an intellectual understanding of the realities of life, even though his emotions were not fully in line with that thinking.

He saw that life consists of being born, growing old, falling sick and dying. He saw it as an ever changing process from birth to death. He did not see death as the opposite of life, but as a part of life. He saw that birth and death are only the two ends of the same stick of life. Life is not a personal existence, but a process of impersonal activity that has a beginning and end. Life is not a static entity, but a dynamic process of change, like a flame.

The Buddha also saw that all human beings are selfishly running after things that are dependent on conditions and therefore subject to aging, disease, and death. They also begin to become attached to these things and personalize them, and are reluctant to let go of them. This results in much crime, wars, terrorism and suffering to everyone.

He also realized that there are some people who renounce and move away from things that depend on conditions and subject to aging, disease, and death. For him, they seemed to be doing the right thing. Therefore he thought: "I will be a renouncer myself, living the right kind of life".

This decision resulted in the "Great Renunciation" of the Buddha (*Maha Abhinikkhamana*), which began his further growth and development of dispassion, compassion, happiness, tranquillity, and in-sight, ending in his ultimate freedom from all suffering, through a paradigm shift, from existence (*bhava*) to experience (*dhamma*), thus Awakening (*sambodhi*) from the dream of existence (*bhava nidra*) and "entering the reality of experience" (*Tathagata*).

His in-sight, resulting in dispassion, which lead to compassion towards all beings, made him see how all beings were suffering, due to passion and attachment. Because all beings are subject to suffering, he felt a great sympathetic resonance or empathy for all beings. He wished that all beings be free from passion and suffering. This was his compassion wherein he felt in unison with all, as if everyone's suffering was his own. He made an effort to free the whole world, not merely himself, from suffering, by finding the way, for all to be completely free from every suffering.

His great compassion (*karuna*) culminated in the loss of his self-consciousness. The loss of self consciousness resulted in freedom from all self-centred emotions, which lead to freedom from all suffering. This resulted in the happiness of selflessness (*mudita*). This selfless happiness was not an emotional excitement, but a calm, peaceful, and restful state of mind. This was why the mind of the Buddha always remained compassionate, happy, tranquil, and introspective despite the sufferings of the world. He also encouraged others to be compassionate, tranquil and introspective in the same way.

The Buddha was one who had reached perfection in the Harmonious Perspective, resulting in:

- 1. Dispassion
- 2. Compassion
- 3. Happiness

4. Tranquillity
5. In-sight – Introspection – experiencing experience
Awakening from the dream of existence

At this point a *Paradigm shift* occurs from *existence* to *experience*

EXISTENCE ⇒ EXPERIENCE

This paradigm shift was what made him a Buddha (the Awake one). It was this awakening that culminated in NIBBANA. Once the paradigm shift had occurred, he did not take that to be the absolute truth and stay there. It was only a paradigm. It was possible for him to return to the former paradigm in order to communicate with others. In other words, he could toggle between the two experiences at will.

[Reflecting of the Dhamma](#)

STAGE I: RECOLLECTIONS (ANUSSATI)

REFLECTING ON THE DHAMMA

These attributes comprise the essence of the Buddha, which is **THE DHAMMA**. The Buddha is Dhamma in **concrete** form, while Dhamma is Buddha in **abstract** form. This was why the Buddha said, “One who sees me sees the Dhamma, and one who sees the Dhamma sees me”.

Dhamma can also be seen as the essence of spirituality, or the essence of Divinity or God, which is LOVE. The Buddha called this essence the Divine Dwelling (*brahma vihara*), which was described in the form of the Fourfold Experience of – Universal Benevolence (Metta), Empathetic tuning into others feelings of sorrow and happiness as if it were one’s own (Karuna), The selfless happiness derived from the freedom from self-centred emotions (Mudita), Introspective tranquillity and peace of mind independent of the circumstantial vicissitudes of life (Upekkha).

Therefore when reflecting on the Dhamma, one should reflect on these same attributes of the Buddha, but in abstract form: Dispassion (*viraga*), Compassion (metta, *karuna*), Selfless Happiness (*mudita*), Tranquillity (*samadhi*), and In-sight (*pañña*). By understanding the meaning of these attributes, one begins to appreciate them and cultivate them. Understanding the Dhamma is important for the practice, because it is the extraordinary technique of purifying the mind. Dhamma includes the means (*magga*) to Nirvana as well as the end (*phala*), which represent the benefits gained from the practice.

For an intelligent person the Dhamma becomes a map to find the way to Nirvana. This Dhamma is the Harmonious Perspective. Without the Dhamma one cannot reach the goal. We cannot depend on teachers blindly, because they may lead us in the wrong direction. It is only by understanding the road properly ourselves that we can reach the goal. Treading the spiritual path is a matter of intelligence and strength of mind. This is why the Buddha said, “I do not teach the dhamma like showing the way to a blind man who has to trust me blindly and follow me, but I am like a surgeon who operates on the eye and makes the blind man see for himself. Then he has to have confidence only in himself and not in me”. The more we follow the way, the more we begin to understand the way. The more we understand the way the more we begin to follow the way correctly and so reach the goal. Knowledge of the benefits of the practice encourages one to practice.

[Reflecting on the Sangha](#)

STAGE I: RECOLLECTIONS (ANUSSATI)

REFLECTING ON THE SANGHA

The Dhamma was what the Buddha taught His followers to practice. **THE SANGHA**, being the community of followers, they individually possess these qualities to different degrees. Each individual will keep on practicing till each individual reaches the state of perfection, in this life itself or in another life to come. When we think of the Sangha, we think of these same qualities generally present in the SANGHA. We do not think of individuals but we think of the community as a whole. We understand that there are members of the SANGHA who had reached the highest level of perfection and those who are on the way. We also know that there are those who are at our own level. Sometimes we are aware of some who are even below our level, just as when standing on an escalator we can see people at the top, those at the bottom, and those standing midway. When we think of the Sangha we see people at different levels. We don’t blame or condemn a person at the lower level for being at that level. We only think, “If that person can reach the higher level some day, I can also reach the higher level some day”. This gives us courage to practice. When we consider how even those at the lowest levels will someday reach the highest, we are inspired to practice. Reflecting on the Sangha we reflect on the same attributes.

[Reflecting on Onself](#)

STAGE I: RECOLLECTIONS (ANUSSATI)

REFLECTING ON ONESELF

We cultivate these same qualities **WITHIN US**. We can examine ourselves to discover to what extent we possess these qualities within us, and also to what extent these qualities are absent in us. This tells us how much we need to practice in order to reach perfection. This knowledge inspires and encourages us. When we reflect on the Buddha, Dhamma, and the Sangha we are inspired to cultivate these qualities to perfection within us. When we reflect on ourselves we see ourselves too standing on the escalator but moving upwards little by little. Even if the escalator is slow we are still moving. We are progressing. Our speed depends on our level of enthusiasm.

[Stage II: Cultivation of Good Thoughts](#)

STAGE II: CULTIVATION OF GOOD THOUGHTS

After reflecting on the Buddha, Dhamma, and the Sangha, and even on oneself, and having got the inspiration to practice, one then begins to practice cultivating these qualities within us.

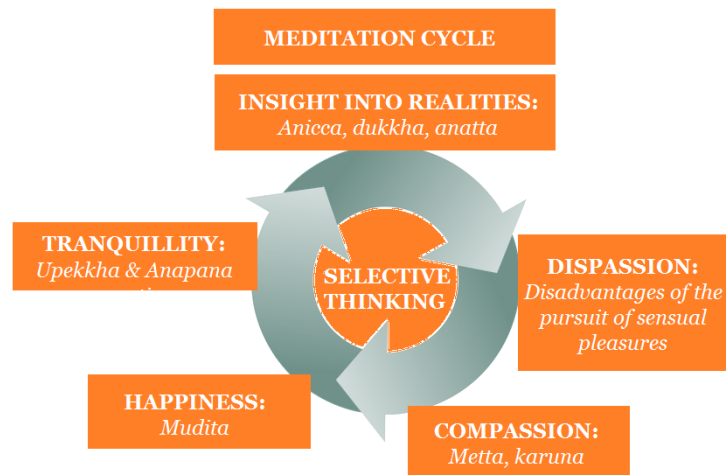
Reflect on:

(A) AWARENESS OF THE REALITIES OF LIFE	Reflecting on the instability, painfulness and impersonality of all conditioned phenomena.
(B) DISPASSION	Reflection on the disadvantages of the pursuit sensual pleasure and attachments
(C) COMPASSION	Selfless interest in the welfare of all beings
(D) HAPPINESS	Experiencing the Happiness of selflessness
(E) TRANQUILLITY	Focusing attention on the experience within and the resulting stillness of mind
(F) AWARENESS OF THE REALITIES OF LIFE	Reflecting on the instability, painfulness and impersonality of all conditioned phenomena

The Harmonious Cycle of Meditation

STAGE II: CULTIVATION OF GOOD THOUGHTS THE HARMONIOUS CYCLE OF MEDITATION

This method of meditation begins a harmonious cycle that brings about a transformation within an individual, resulting in gaining the qualities of dispassion, compassion, happiness, and tranquillity of mind. Remember this change is gradual and not sudden. It depends on the amount of practice.



Awareness of the Realities of Life

STAGE II: CULTIVATION OF GOOD THOUGHTS AWARENESS OF THE REALITIES OF LIFE

The Logic of this Reflection

1. Instability (*anicca*)

- There are no entities in the world
- There are only activities (*sankhara*)
- Every activity has a beginning, an end, with change in between
- Every activity is dependent on conditions
- When conditions are present they begin and continue
- The absence of one condition stops the activity
- All apparent entities are mental constructs
- All that I call mine or my-self are such mental constructs (*sankhara*)
- Mental constructs are of two kinds: subjective and objective
- The subjective construct is the “self”
- The objective constructs are the “world” and “things” in it
- All that we find are subjective and objective activities
- The construction may be mental or physical
- Such a construct is dependent on conditions
- Every construct that is dependent on conditions is to change, destruction, and separation.
- When the conditions change, separate, or are destroyed, the construct also changes, separates or is destroyed

Therefore **All constructs are unstable** (*sabbe sankhara anicca*)

2. Discomfort (*dukkha*)

- All constructs that I call mine or myself are unstable.
- What is unstable is insecure
- What is insecure is unpleasant and uncomfortable

All constructs are uncomfortable (*sabbe sankhara dukkha*)3. Impersonality (*anatta*)

- What is uncomfortable is not as I wish.
- If it is not as I wish, it is not under my power.
- If it is not under my power, it is not mine.
- Whatever is not mine cannot be me, or a part of me.
- Whatever cannot be me, or a part of me, cannot be my “self”.
- Whatever is not me, or mine, or my “self” is impersonal.
- **All experience is impersonal** (*sabbe dhamma anatta*)
- What is impersonal cannot be personal.
- What cannot be personal should not be personalized.
- If what cannot be personal has been personalized
- Grief, lamentation, pain, distress, and depression follows
- To solve this problem one should depersonalize

All constructs when depersonalized, cease to be uncomfortable.

Practicing Penetrative Awareness**STAGE II: CULTIVATION OF GOOD THOUGHTS****PRACTISING PENETRATIVE AWARENESS**General - Personal

This is to apply the Harmonious Perspective in detail on everything we have personalized.

1. I am subject to aging. I have not transcended aging.
2. I am subject to disease. I have not transcended disease.
3. I am subject to death. I have not transcended death.

All that is near and dear to me is subject to change and separation. When these things are changing and separating all that is left is my emotional state (*kamma*). My emotional state makes me unhappy. By depending on changing external conditions for happiness I experience sorrow and unhappiness. While not depending on these external conditions for my happiness, I cultivate dispassion, compassion, happiness and tranquillity, I gain true happiness. Pleasure is stimulation of the senses. Happiness is a state of mind free from selfish emotions.

Specific - Personal

1. My job is dependent on conditions,
Because it is dependent on conditions, it is unstable,
Because it is unstable, it is uncomfortable,
Because it is uncomfortable, it is not under my control,
Because it is not under my control, it is not mine,
Because it is not mine, it is not my “self”, nor a part of my “self”.
2. My social status is dependent on conditions,
Because it is dependent on conditions, it is unstable,
Because it is unstable, it is uncomfortable,
Because it is uncomfortable, it is not under my control,
Because it is not under my control, it is not mine,
Because it is not mine, it is not my “self”, or a part of my “self”.
3. My wealth (bank account, house, car and other properties) is dependent on conditions,
Because it is dependent on conditions, it is unstable,
Because it is unstable, it is uncomfortable,
Because it is uncomfortable, it is not under my control,
Because it is not under my control, it is not mine,
Because it is not mine, it is not my “self”, or a part of my “self”.
4. My family members (parents, spouse, children and other relatives) are dependent on conditions,
Because they are dependent on conditions, they are unstable,
Because they are unstable, they are uncomfortable,
Because they are uncomfortable, they are not under my control,
Because they are not under my control, they are not mine,
Because they are not mine, they are not my “self”, or a part of my “self”.
5. My friends and associates are dependent on conditions,
Because they are dependent on conditions, they are unstable,
Because they are unstable, they are uncomfortable,
Because they are uncomfortable, they are not under my control,
Because they are not under my control, they are not mine,
Because they are not mine, they are not my “self”, nor a part of my “self”.
6. My self (body, sensations, emotions, and thoughts) is dependent on conditions,
Because it is dependent on conditions, it is unstable,
Because it is unstable, it is uncomfortable,
Because it is uncomfortable, it is not under my control,
Because it is not under my control, it is not mine,
Because it is not mine, it is not my “self”, or a part of my “self”.

General - Personal

1. I am subject to aging. I am not free from aging.
2. I am subject to disease. I am not free from disease.
3. I am subject to death. I am not free from death.

All that is desirable and pleasant to me will change and separate from me. Therefore, there is nothing to desire or personalize. All that is left for me is my emotional state. This emotional state is my *kamma*. My *kamma* is the emotions I live with. It is this *kamma* that gives me happiness or unhappiness. It is due to these emotions that I will be reborn. Therefore, I will not hold onto things that are unstable (what is subject to old age, disease and death). My only purpose in life therefore is to purify my thoughts. *Kamma* is my only inheritance. I am born of *kamma*. My friends, relatives, parents are also *kamma*. My only refuge is my *kamma*. Whatever I do, whether good or bad, it becomes my inheritance. This is the way of life, not only for me, but for all beings.

(This last thought should lead to dispassion within oneself, as well as compassion for all beings. This also leads to the loss of self-consciousness, which results in the disappearance of unhappiness and calmness of mind)

Specific - Universal

1. For all human beings, their jobs are dependent on conditions,
Because they are dependent on conditions, they are unstable,
Because they are unstable, they are uncomfortable,
Because they are uncomfortable, they are not under their control,
Because they are not under their control, they are not theirs
Because they are not theirs, they are not themselves or parts of themselves.
2. For all human beings, their social status is dependent on conditions,
Because it is dependent on conditions, it is unstable,
Because it is unstable, it is uncomfortable,
Because it is uncomfortable, it is not under their control,
Because it is not under their control, it is not theirs,
Because it is not theirs, it is not themselves or a part of themselves.
3. For all human beings, their wealth (bank account, house, car and other properties) is dependent on conditions,
Because it is dependent on conditions, it is unstable,
Because it is unstable, it is uncomfortable,
Because it is uncomfortable, it is not under their control,
Because it is not under their control, it is not theirs,
Because it is not theirs, it is not themselves or a part of themselves.
4. For all human beings, their family members (parents, spouse, children, and other relatives) are dependent on conditions,
Because they are dependent on conditions, they are unstable,
Because they are unstable, they are uncomfortable,
Because they are uncomfortable, they are not under their control,
Because they are not under their control, they are not theirs,
Because they are not theirs, they are not themselves or parts of themselves.
5. For all human beings, their friends and associates are dependent on conditions,
Because they are dependent on conditions, they are unstable,
Because they are unstable, they are uncomfortable,
Because they are uncomfortable, they are not under their control,
Because they are not under their control, they are not theirs,
Because they are not theirs, they are not themselves or parts of themselves.
6. For all beings, their selves (bodies, sensations, emotions, and thoughts) are dependent on conditions,
Because they are dependent on conditions, they are unstable,
Because they are unstable, they are uncomfortable,
Because they are uncomfortable, they are not under their control,
Because they are not under their control, they are not theirs,
Because they are not theirs, they are not themselves or parts of themselves.

General - Universal

1. All beings are subject to aging. All beings are not free from aging.
2. All beings are subject to disease. All beings are not free from disease.
3. All beings are subject to death. All beings are not free from death.

All that is near and dear to them are subject to change and separation. When these things are changing and separating all that is left is the emotional state (*kamma*). This emotional state makes them unhappy. By depending on these changing conditions for happiness, they experience sorrow and unhappiness. While not depending on these external conditions for their happiness, they cultivate dispassion, compassion, happiness and tranquillity. This brings them true happiness.

Gain and loss, fame and notoriety, praise and blame, pleasure and pain are all unstable, and changing, vicissitudes of life. Changes come in the form of:

- Gain or loss (*laba, alaba*)
- Social status or loss of social status (*yasa, ayasa*)
- Praise or blame (*pasansa, ninda*)
- Pleasure or pain (*sukha, dukkha*)

May my mind be unshaken by these vicissitudes of life. May the minds of all beings be unshaken by these vicissitudes. May all beings be well and happy!

(Note: Try to maintain the above thoughts in your mind constantly, by repeating them regularly)

Dispersion

STAGE II: CULTIVATION OF GOOD THOUGHTS

DISPASSION

Reflect on the disadvantages of the pursuit of sensual pleasure and attachments. Reflect on the following in relation to concrete examples from your own life. Examine your own past in the light of this teaching:

1. The arising of hatred or desire is the arising of discomfort. The more unpleasant or pleasant the object hated or desired, the more uncomfortable the hatred or desire.
2. The frustration of desire, when not satisfied is even worse. This discomfort can lead to the discomfort of others too. This discomfort, in the extreme, can lead to crime and suicide. It is not always possible to satisfy desires.
3. The struggle to satisfy desire could be uncomfortable too. The failure to satisfy after an uncomfortable struggle can be an even more uncomfortable disappointment.
4. Success in satisfaction after an uncomfortable struggle can be a great relief. The release of tension when the desired object is obtained is what is experienced as normal happiness or pleasure.
5. Once the object desired is obtained, we cease to derive any pleasure out of it. It also can become stale and unpleasant. The pleasure is impermanent.
6. What has been obtained is personalized as, "this is mine". To lose what has been personalized is to lose a part of oneself. The thought of loss brings about a feeling of insecurity and anxiety. This makes one begin to protect what has been obtained and personalized.
7. The struggle to protect and maintain what has been obtained is uncomfortable too. Protection involves much anxiety, worry, mental and physical discomfort, stress and distress.
8. Finally, we cannot avoid parting from what has been obtained and personalized. When parting, the discomfort is very great.
9. But the cycle starts all over again in spite of the suffering involved. This is how stupidly we suffer, being carried away by our emotions. Blinded by our emotions, we never become aware of the suffering we are going through. We recurrently begin the cycle of coming into being through personalization and continue to suffer.
10. It is only by becoming aware of this suffering that we become free of this self-inflicted pain. Actually, it is not done by us. It is something that happens to us. We are the victims of a natural process. The wisdom of the Buddha shows us the way out. What is unstable, uncomfortable and impersonal should be given up.

The flow chart below illustrates the perils of the pursuit of sensual pleasures, as described in the *Mahanidana Sutta* in the *Dialogues of the Buddha (DB)*.

PERILS OF THE PURSUIT OF SENSUAL PLEASURES



Compassion

STAGE II: CULTIVATION OF GOOD THOUGHTS

COMPASSION

Cultivation of Compassion:

1. Universal benevolence (*metta*)
2. Empathy (*karuna*)

Compassion has an area dimension called universal benevolence (*metta*) and a depth dimension called empathy (*karuna*). Universal benevolence (*metta*) is a selfless longing for weal and welfare of all beings. It is not a love for one individual or even love for members of one's family. It is not even patriotism or love for all humanity. It is a longing for the weal and welfare of all beings without exception, even including animals, and even unknown beings in other worlds. Universal benevolence is losing one's self-interest in the interest in all beings with no exceptions. It is like a drop of water that enters the ocean and loses its identity by merging into the waters of the ocean. In the same way, self-interest is lost in the interest in all beings, including oneself. Interest in others is not opposed to self-interest. It is extending one's self-interest to include all other beings in this interest without exceptions. One's interest, which was originally narrow, being concerned only about oneself, is now expanded to include all beings without exception. Universal benevolence is broad mindedness without limits.

Empathy (*Karuna*) the depth dimension is the concern how deeply one is interested in the welfare of all beings. It is interest in the welfare of all beings without making any distinction between oneself and others. Others welfare is as important as one's own, as the mother is concerned about the welfare of one's own child. Empathy (*karuna*) is also to be in tune with the sorrows and the happiness of others as if it were ones own. It may be called sympathy or empathy where ones heart vibrates in unison with that of others, and is able to comprehend the others' points of view and feel it.

Empathy can be directed at five levels of discomfort (*dukkha*):

1. Empathy for those who have lost what they possessed (persons -- through death; things -- through theft; natural disasters, etc.) and for those who are unable to get what they want due to inability.
2. Empathy for those who have lost their self-identity (loss of position in society, suffering from inferiority complex, ego challenged, etc.).
3. Empathy for beings in the human world (in prisons, hospitals, refugee camps, and those subject to starvation, suppression, etc.).
4. Empathy for other less privileged beings (animals, ghosts, beings in hells), that you may not even know about.
5. Empathy for those who are worrying or repenting for their misdeeds.

Empathy can be directed at five levels of comfort (*sukha*)

1. Empathy for those who have gained many things they wished for
 2. Empathy for those who have gained their self-identity
 3. Empathy for more privileged beings in the human world who are comfortable and happy
 4. Empathy for more privileged beings in heavens
 5. Empathy for those who are enjoying the freedom from guilt and the benefits of being good and pure in mind
- Empathy is not merely the sympathetic resonance for others sorrow but also the sympathetic congratulation for others happiness and comfort.

Cultivation of Universal Benevolence (*metta*):

We begin by making good wishes towards one-self first, thus wishing one's own welfare. We are all self-centered to start with. It is these self-centered wishes that we expand to include all beings. That is how we broaden the mind. It is important to think these thoughts with feeling instead of merely verbalizing. Because feeling is connected with a mental image, it is important to visualize the area you spread the feeling of compassion.

Therefore thinking as follows:

Step I

May I be well, comfortable, peaceful and happy, free from passion, free from hatred, free from confusion, free from worries, free from fears, and may I maintain myself dispassionate, compassionate, happy and tranquil.

Step II

Just as I should be well, peaceful and happy, may all beings in this room be well, comfortable, peaceful and happy (without making any distinction between oneself and others).

May all beings in this room whether human or non-human, small or large, far or near, visible or invisible, known or unknown, be free from passion, free from hatred, free from confusion, free from worries, free from fears, and may they all maintain themselves dispassionate, compassionate, happy and tranquil.

Step III

Keep repeating this same formula as above extending these good wishes outwards all beings in ever expanding concentric circles, moving from the room to the city, to the province, country, continent, earth, and the whole universe, and even beyond the universe, to all spheres of existence known and unknown, without limits, without bounds, to infinity without excluding anyone.

Step IV

Remain in the final stage of universal benevolence to all beings without exception, as long as possible.

Cultivation of Empathy (*karuna*):

Think of all those beings who are suffering, here in the human world, and even in the world of ghosts and hells. Try to put yourself in their shoes and feel their suffering as if it were your own. Wish that these beings be free from all suffering as soon as possible. Wish that they find happiness soon.

Wish that they be free from passion, free from hatred, free from confusion, free from worries, and free from fears. May they all be dispassionate, compassionate, happy, and tranquil.

Now think of all beings in pleasant conditions here in this human world as well as outside, in the heavenly pleasure worlds, the peaceful worlds of form, and the peaceful worlds empty of forms. Try to imagine how happy and peaceful they are and feel happy about their happiness. Wish that their happiness lasts long. Wish that they be free from passion, free from hatred, free from confusion, free from worries, free from fears, and may they all be dispassionate, compassionate, happy and tranquil.

Cultivation of Selfless Happiness

STAGE II: CULTIVATION OF GOOD THOUGHTS

Cultivation of Selfless Happiness (*mudita*):

With the cultivation of compassion and empathy, self-consciousness has extended beyond its limits to become the consciousness of all beings. Self-consciousness has been transformed into universal consciousness. This loss of self-consciousness brings all unhappiness to an end. What is left is the experience of happiness, which is sometimes called rapture. This is the happiness of selflessness. Cultivate this happiness by thinking, “may all beings be well and happy”. Try to remain in this selfless state of happiness as long as possible without self-consciousness.

Note: This experience of selfless happiness is the result of practicing dispassion and compassion. It cannot be practiced independent of the former states.

Cultivation of Tranquillity

STAGE II: CULTIVATION OF GOOD THOUGHTS

Cultivation of Tranquillity (*upekkha*):

The happiness of selflessness is not an emotional excitement. It is a state of tranquillity. Try to maintain this tranquillity or stillness of mind as long as you can.

Observe the relaxation of the body and the calmness of the breathing and the pleasant comfortable feeling of relaxation. Maintain the calmness by focusing on the comfortable feeling of relaxation. Notice that when happiness is experienced within, attention stays within, without running to external objects. When the attention is focused within, the mind remains undisturbed without searching for happiness in the world outside or external circumstances. This is tranquil introspection (*upekkha*). It is healthy introspection, which should be distinguished from the so-called morbid introspection, which is not introspection at all but self-absorption. Remain in this healthy, relaxed, tranquil, peaceful state as long as possible.

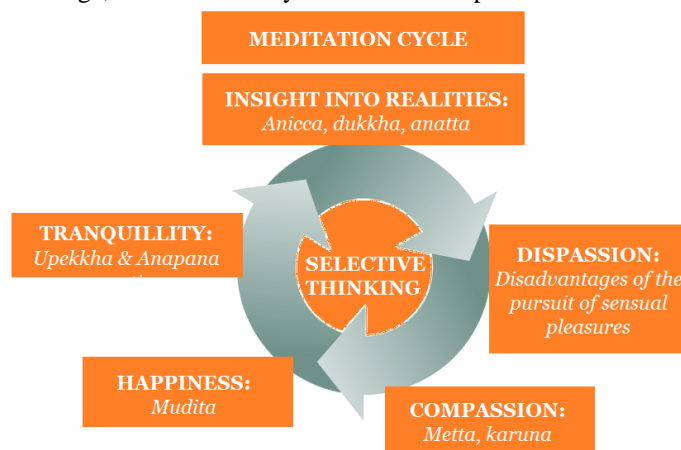
Tranquillity is produced by relaxation of the body and experiencing the comfortable feeling of relaxation. It is a resting of the mind, due to the absence of emotions. It is not produced by concentration of the mind but by a stillness of mind due to absence of emotional disturbance.

The Five Good Thoughts

STAGE II: CULTIVATION OF GOOD THOUGHTS

The Five Good Thoughts

The five good thoughts to be cultivated are actually five stages in the process of transformation of the mind. In other words, they are five parts of a cycle of change, which ultimately becomes five aspects of the same final state of mind.



In-sight – Gaining the Harmonious Perspective.

Dispassion – The harmonious perspective leads to the giving up of self-centered desires.

Compassion – When selfishness disappears, one is able to take an interest in the welfare of others.

Happiness – When self-absorption and worry about oneself is no more, there is the experience of happiness.

Tranquility – The experience of selfless happiness is not an excitement, but a state of tranquility.

In-sight – Tranquility results in the mind settling within, when true introspection becomes possible. Introspection leads to the experiencing of experience, instead of existence, which is a paradigm shift. This results in Awakening from the “dream of existence”. This is liberation or emancipation (*vimutti*) from the emotional cause and existential suffering. If this complete insight has not been attained, the Harmonious Cycle begins again.

Harmonious Mental Equilibrium

Harmonious Mental Equilibrium (*samma samadhi*)

This is homeostasis, or the return to the original purity and tranquility of mind, which has been lost due to the emotional reaction to stimulation of the senses in the form attraction and repulsion. This state of equilibrium consists of five parts:

1. Inference (*vitakka*)
2. Inquiry (*vicara*)
3. Rapture of mind (*piti*)
4. Comfort of body (*sukha*)
5. Unity of mind (*ekaggata*)

Introversion of Attention - Attention in and out Breathing

Introversion of attention (*sati+upatthana*)

Attention to in and out breathing (*anapana sati*)

1. In this case a follower having gone into a forest, a foot a tree, or empty shelter, sits cross-legged with back erect.
2. Having withdrawn attention from external surroundings, he focuses his attention within. (body, feeling, mood, thought)
3. Fully aware, he breathes in; and fully aware, he breathes out.
4. When breathing in long, he knows “I am breathing in long”; when breathing out long, he knows “I am breathing out long”.
5. When breathing in short, he knows “I am breathing in short”; when breathing out short, he knows “I am breathing out short”.
6. Aware of how the entire body feels, he breathes in
7. Aware of how the entire body feels, he breathes out
8. Relaxing the bodily activity he breathes in
9. Relaxing the bodily activity he breathes out
 - a. Experiencing happiness he breathes in
 - b. Experiencing happiness he breathes out
 - c. Experiencing comfort he breathes in
 - d. Experiencing comfort he breathes out
 - e. Experiencing tranquility he breathes in
 - f. Experiencing tranquility he breathes out

The Establishment of Fourfold Attention

Introversion of attention

The Establishment of Fourfold Attention (*cattaro satipatthana*)

1. Observing the **body** (*kaya anupassana*)
2. Observing the **feelings** (*vedana anupassana*)
3. Observing the **mood** (*citta anupassana*)
4. Observing the **thoughts** (*dhamma anupassana*)

Breathing Meditation

BREATHING MEDITATION

1. Sit with your back erect
2. Observe any tensions in the body and relax
3. As your body relaxes, the attention will automatically go to the breath
4. Observe the nature of the breathing; is it long or short; obstructed or not?
5. Observe how you feel in the body, as you breathe in
6. As you keep doing this the body begins to relax
7. Then you begin to experience the comfortable feeling of relaxation
8. Then you begin to experience happiness
9. Focus your attention on the happiness and comfort
 - Enjoy the pleasant feeling of happiness and comfort
 - Remain in that state as long as possible
 - Practice this regularly

The benefits of this meditation

1. You will be free from worries
2. You will be happy always
3. You will make friends
4. You can think more clearly
5. You will be good at your work

*Dvedha vitakka Sutta****Dvedhā vitakka Sutta Two Kinds of Thoughts (MN Volume I: 153)*** -A new translation -

Thus have I heard:

Once, the Blessed One was sojourning in Savatthi, at the Jetavanārāma, the Anāthapindika's Monastery. While there, the Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus thus:

“Oh Bhikkhus”!

“Yes Lord”. They replied.

Then the Blessed One said: “Before my awakening, Bhikkhus, while I was still an unawake Bodhisatta, it occurred to me: “Suppose I distinguish between good thoughts and bad thoughts”. So I separated passionate, angry, and violent thoughts; from dispassionate, kind, and peaceful thoughts”.

When I dwelt thus watchful, alert, and vigilant, a passionate thought arose in me. Then I recognized: “A passionate thought has arisen in me, this can lead to my own harm, to others harm and to the harm of both. It obstructs intelligence, favours destructiveness, and leads me away from Nibbana. When I considered: “this lead to my own harm”, it subsided in me. When I considered, this leads to others harm, it subsided in me. When I considered, this leads to the harm of both, it subsided in me. When I considered, this obstructs intelligence, favours destructiveness, and leads me away from Nibbana, it subsided in me. Every passionate thought that arose in me, I did not accept it, I rejected it, and I eliminated it. Similarly, when an angry thought arose in me, I did not accept it, I rejected it, and I eliminated it. When a cruel thought arose in me, I did not accept it, I rejected it, and I eliminated it.

“Bhikkhus, whatever a Bhikkhu frequently thinks and ponders over, the mind will be inclined towards it. If he frequently thinks and ponders over passionate thoughts, he has abandoned dispassion, and the mind is inclined more towards passionate thoughts. Similarly, if he frequently thinks and ponders over angry thoughts, he has abandoned kindness, and the mind is inclined more towards anger. Or if he frequently thinks and ponders over cruel thoughts, he has abandoned peacefulness, and his mind becomes inclined more towards thoughts of cruelty. This way I saw the danger, futility and confusion in unwholesome mental states, and I saw the advantage of cultivating wholesome mental states.

As I dwelt thus: watchful, alert, and vigilant, a thought of renunciation a rose in me. Then I recognized, this thought of renunciation has risen in me. This does not lead me to my own harm, to others harm, or to the harm of both. It promotes intelligence, it supports constructiveness, and it leads me to Nibbana. If I think and ponder over this thought for one night, or for one day, or even for a night and a day, I see no danger. Excessive thinking and pondering, however, might tire my body, and when my body is tired, the mind becomes tired, when the mind is tired, it is far from tranquility. So I steadied my mind internally, quietened it, brought it to a state of tranquility and stillness. Why is that? In order to prevent the mind from being disturbed.

As I dwelt thus, watchful, alert, and vigilant, a thought of kindness arose in me. Then I recognized, this thought of kindness has risen in me. This does not lead me to my own harm, to others harm, or to the harm of both. It promotes intelligence, it supports constructiveness, and it leads me to Nibbana. If I think and ponder over this thought for one night, or for one day, or even for a night and a day, I see no danger. Excessive thinking and pondering, however, might tire my body, and when my body is tired, the mind becomes tired, when the mind is tired, it is far from tranquility. So I steadied my mind internally, quietened it, brought it to a state of tranquility and stillness. Why is that? In order to prevent the mind from being disturbed.

As I dwelt thus, watchful, alert, and vigilant, a thought of peacefulness arose in me. Then I recognized, this thought of peacefulness has arisen in me. This does not lead to my own harm, to others harm, or to the harm of both. It promotes intelligence, it supports constructiveness, and it leads me to Nibbana. If I think and ponder over these thoughts for one night, or for one day, or even for a night and a day, I see no danger. Excessive thinking and pondering, however, might tire my body, and when the body is tired, the mind becomes tired, and when the mind is tired, it is far from tranquility. So I steadied my mind internally, quietened it, brought it to a state of tranquility and stillness. Why is that? In order to prevent my mind from being disturbed.

“Bhikkhus, whatever a Bhikkhu frequently thinks and ponders over, the mind will become inclined towards it. If he frequently thinks and ponders over thoughts of renunciation, he has abandoned passion, and his mind is inclined towards thoughts of renunciation. If he frequently thinks and ponders over thoughts of kindness or of peacefulness, he has abandoned anger and cruelty, and his mind inclines towards kind and peaceful thoughts.

Having gone thus far, I had only to be aware that those good thoughts were going on in my mind. I realized my vigilant practice has progressed, my unremitting introspective attention was established in me, my body was relaxed and comfortable, and my mind was happy, tranquil, and unified.

In this way, withdrawn from passionate thoughts, withdrawn from evil thoughts, I entered upon the first Jhana with observation and inference, experiencing joy and comfort based on mental equilibrium ... ultimately I came to realize that: birth is ended, lived is the holy life, done is what has to be done, and no more is the continuity of existence.

“So Bhikkhus, the safe and good path to be travelled joyfully has been reopened by me, the wrong path has been closed off. What a teacher who seeks your welfare, and has compassion for you can do, that I have done for you, bhikkhus. There are these roots of trees, and these empty huts. Bhikkhus meditate, do not delay, or else you will regret it later. This is my advice to you”.

Thus was the Blessed One's utterance. The Bhikkhus were delighted and inspired by what the Blessed One said.

Vitakka Santhana Sutta**VITAKKA SANTHANA SUTTA**

(MN Volume I: 152)

-A new translation -

TECHNIQUE OF CALMING THOUGHTS

The disciple who is engaged in the development of the superior disposition should cultivate five mental strategies at the appropriate times.

If an image arises in a disciple's mind, which, as he reflects on it, arouses evil and unworthy thoughts associated with lust, hate and confusion, then an image contrary to this image, which is worthy, must be reflected on. When this is done, those evil and unworthy thoughts wane and cease. Just as a skillful carpenter or his assistant, removes an old wooden peg by placing a new wooden peg and hammering on it, so the disciple removes a bad mental image by substituting a good mental image.

When this is done, if the evil and unworthy thoughts still continue to arise, then one should consider the evil consequences of these evil thoughts thus: "These thoughts are unworthy; these thoughts are incorrect; these thoughts lead to painful consequences". When this is done, those evil unworthy thoughts wane and cease. Just as if there is a woman, man or child who is clean and cleanly dressed, and someone hangs on his or her neck the carcass of a snake, dog, or human, he or she would be horrified, humiliated or disgusted, even so when one considers the evil consequences of evil thoughts, they wane and cease.

When this is done, if the evil and unworthy thoughts still continue to arise, then one should stop paying attention to these thoughts and stop reflecting on them. When this is done, those evil unworthy thoughts wane and cease. Just as a man with eyes who does not want to see something that comes within the range of his vision would shut his eyes or look aside, even so one should shut one's mind to these evil thoughts by not paying attention to them, and ignoring them.

When this is done, if the evil unworthy thought still arise, then one should focus on relaxation and calmness, calming down the activity of thought. When this is done, those evil unworthy thoughts wane and cease. Just as a man who is running begins to walk slowly, or a man who is walking slowly, begins to stop and stand, or a man who is standing sits down, or a man who is sitting lies down, thus changing from a more tiresome position to a less tiresome, or more restful or more relaxed position, even so one focuses on relaxation and calmness and rests the mind.

When this is done, if the evil unworthy thoughts still arise, one should relax the clenched teeth, relax the tongue pressed on the palate, and thus remove the thought associated with evil easily without exertion, by relaxing and calming the mind. Just as a strong man might hold a weak man by the head or the body and throw him out easily, without exerting himself, being fully relaxed and calm, even so the disciple relaxes the jaws and tongue and throws out the thought without exerting himself, by relaxing the body and calming the mind.

When this is done, those evil unworthy thoughts associated with lust, hate and confusion wane and cease. When they disappear, the mind stays within, rests within, becomes uniform, and enters equilibrium.

The disciple who achieves this is called "Master of Mind". He thinks what he wants to think. He does not think what is unwanted. He has stopped the emotional urge, broken the fetters, removed egotism, and ended suffering.

Obeisance**Obeisance:***Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa***Obeisance to the Sublime, Emancipated, Harmoniously Awakened One**Refuge**The Triple Refuge:***Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi***I take refuge in the Buddha***Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi***I take refuge in the Dhamma***Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi***I take refuge in the Sangha***Dutiyampi – Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi***Secondly – I take refuge in the Buddha***Dutiyampi – Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi***Secondly – I take refuge in the Dhamma***Dutiyampi – Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi***Secondly – I take refuge in the Dhamma***Tatīyampi – Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi***Thirdly – I take refuge in the Buddha***Tatīyampi – Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi***Thirdly – I take refuge in the Dhamma***Tatīyampi – Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi***Thirdly – I take refuge in the Sangha**

The Five Disciplinary Principles

The Five Disciplinary Principles:

1. *Panatipata veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*

I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding disrespect for life.

2. *Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*

I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding stealing

3. *Kamesu miccacara veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*

I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding sexual misconduct

4. *Musavada veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*

I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding false speech

5. *Surameraya majja pamadatthana veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*

I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding intoxicants that lead to inebriation and abreaction.

The Eight Disciplinary Principles

The Eight Disciplinary Principles:

1. *Panatipata veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*

I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding disrespect for life.

2. *Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*

I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding stealing

3. *Abrahma cariya veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*

I accept the disciplinary principle of divine living, celibacy

4. *Musavada veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*

I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding false speech

5. *Surameraya majja pamadatthana veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*

I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding intoxicants that lead to inebriation and abreaction

6. *Vikala bhojana veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*

I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding untimely meals

7. *Nacca, gita, vadita, visuka, dassana; mala, gandha, vilepana, dharana, mandana, vibhusanatthana; veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*

I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding shows containing dancing, singing, music, or humor; and avoiding adornments such as garlands, perfumes, unguents, dresses, and ornaments.

8. *Ucca sayana maha sayana veramani sikkhapadaṇ samadiyami*

I accept the disciplinary principle of avoiding the use of elegant and luxurious furniture

Conclusion

Conclusion

It is important to remember that by practicing these disciplinary principles we are attempting to live like the emancipated *Arahants* of old during the retreat. The purpose is to practice the divine life (*brahma cariya*), to the best of our ability now, so that if we cannot complete this purity during this retreat, we would at least be able to continue it in our future lives, till we ultimately attain Nirvana.

No one can become a Buddha instantaneously. Even Prince Siddhatta had to struggle hard in his last life for six years to become a Buddha. It is important to note that his effort was not a mere six year struggle, because this struggle was only his final struggle, after struggling for a countless millions of lives practicing the qualifying *paramitas*. This realization reminds us of the great importance of practicing this retreat. It is of significance to you not only for this life, but also for your entire painful journey through *saṃsara*.

This is why the Buddhists practice meditation retreats. They are not satisfied with blind imaginary hopes, about future everlasting heavens. They struggle hard to purify their minds here and now. If we do not do it now, there is no hope that we will be doing it in the future. Without it, we cannot hope for salvation. Rising above our normal life to a Divine Life (*Brahma cariya*) is the only way to progress.

**ARIYAMAGGA BHAVANA
THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY
INTERMEDIATE RETREAT
TRANQUILITY OF MIND**

Instructor

Ven. Dr. Madawela Punnaji Maha Thera

This form of meditation is based on the original teachings of the Buddha as it is found in the Pali Sutta Pitaka. It is conducted at three retreat levels:

(1) Beginner	Selective Thinking (<i>anussati</i>)
(2) Intermediate	Cultivation of Tranquility (<i>sammappadhāna</i>)
(3) Advanced	Awakening from the dream of existence (<i>satta bojjhanga</i>)

[Buddhist Meditation Technique](#)

MEDITATION TECHNIQUE

Buddhist meditation, as taught by us in this retreat, is not a mystical practice. This technique of meditation is for people who are living a secular life as householders, who go to work, have responsibilities, and who are involved in various social relationships. What such people need is freedom from stress, and freedom from worries and anxieties of life. They need peace of mind, healthy relationships, self-confidence, success in life, and efficiency at work. This means learning to gain control over the emotional disturbances that prevent them from thinking clearly or acting rationally. These problematic emotional disturbances come in the form of anger, lust, worries, fears, and anxieties. The form of Buddhist meditation we teach helps one free the mind of emotional disturbances and to think clearly and act rationally.

It involves a systematic technique of consciously purifying the mind. All impurities arise from self-centered emotional states. The pure mind is the tranquil mind. When the mind is purified, one experiences an inner happiness, a physical comfort, and a kindness and compassion that one has never experienced before. The happiness that we refer to is not a state of emotional excitement, but a tranquil state of the mind. The kindness and compassion we teach is not based on attachment, it is a state of unselfishness. As we understand it, emotional excitement is not true happiness, and attachment is not true love. Happiness and kindness are attributes of the pure and tranquil mind.

Therefore the aim of this method of meditation is to cultivate a relaxed body, and a calm mind, resulting in the experience of happiness and a kindness of heart.

[The Sublime Eightfold Way](#)

THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY

This practice of meditation is based on the teaching of the Buddha called the “Sublime-Eight-fold Way” (*ariya atthangika magga*), which is the way to the cessation of all suffering. The term “ariya,” which is commonly translated as “noble,” we have translated as “Sublime,” because it is a supernormal state. This is because the Buddha used the term “ariya” to refer to a higher level of consciousness beyond the normal. The aim of Buddhist meditation is to raise the human consciousness to a higher level, which is beyond the normal. It is more meaningful to translate it as “super-normal,” rather than “noble.” Just as the aim of modern psychotherapy is to raise an abnormal person to a normal level of living, the aim of the Buddha was to bring the normal person to a super-normal level.

We call this supernormal level “Sublime.” It is very important therefore to understand this distinction between “noble” and “Sublime.” This is why we call Buddhist meditation a growth technique, rather than the practice of rules or the rituals in obedience to a lord, out of fear or favour. Therefore, the purpose of the practice of Buddhist meditation is to grow to a higher level of emotional maturity, beyond the normal, and to experience a degree of happiness and kindness beyond the normal. Buddhist meditation is a method of gaining emotional maturity through purification of the mind.

This process of growth of the mind takes place as a psychological evolutionary process. Although biological evolution went on unconsciously based on the natural law of “determinism,” this psychological evolutionary process is consciously executed following a systematic technique, because it is the evolution of consciousness itself. It does not work unconsciously or automatically, or even through a supernatural power. It too is based on the natural law of determinism, though consciously achieved.

This practice is based on one’s own human power. We are not depending on any external power, not even that of a teacher or *guru*. We have to do it self-reliantly by ourselves. This is a “do-it-yourself” technique. We do not believe that a person is born with a free will, but will-power has to be developed, based on the principle of determinism. In a sense, this method of

meditation can be called the development of will power, to control one's irrational emotions. In other words, we are using our conscious mental power to control the unconscious mental process that is going on deterministically.

This is what one learns from our lessons at the center and during our retreats. It is learning how to act rationally instead of emotionally. One will be shown the tools within one, to work on oneself. Working on oneself is one's own job, not the teacher's. The teacher's job is only to show the tools that one already possesses, and to give the instructions on how to use them. Our hope is that you will be able to work on yourself and grow, evolve, and transform. The degree of transformation, and quality of life experienced is the measure of progress. What we look for is growth and transformation, not mere insight. This is why we do not call this method of meditation, "insight meditation." We also do not expect visions or hallucinations of any kind. If what you gain from a retreat is only more will-power, and peace of mind, then you have gained a degree of success.

The first thing one must do is to acquire the right understanding that comes in the form of the harmonious perspective. One must understand that all unhappiness that we experience in life is not due to our unfavorable circumstances, but due to the way we react to our circumstances or our attitude to circumstances. This means that our unhappiness, its cause, and its cure and the way to its cure are within us. In other words, we must stop worrying about our circumstances, and start questioning our attitude to our circumstances, in order to correct it.

[Stop Reacting and Start Responding](#)

STOP REACTING AND START RESPONDING

To put it in another way, we must stop reacting to circumstances and start responding to them. A reaction is emotional and unconscious, while a response is rational and conscious. As mentioned earlier, the difference between an animal and a human being is that animals are passively reacting emotionally to circumstances, while human beings have the capacity to respond rationally to circumstances, by consciously delaying the reaction to get sufficient time to decide, the appropriate response to make in a given situation. Yet the normal human being does not always choose to respond rationally, they often react emotionally like animals. This means that the normal human being is a kind of animal, carrying the animal nature; until, of course, one has fully evolved to the fully human level, where one does not react emotionally to circumstances any more but instead responds rationally to them.

All this explanation means, the normal human being is not yet fully evolved. This is why we have to go through this process of psychological evolution and learn through meditation to evolve, and grow up. This growth is a conscious psychological process rather than an unconscious biological one. The normal human being, when fully evolved, becomes a supernormal human being, who is free from selfish emotional behaviour. He is no more an "ego" or "self," but a "Sublime" individual who is perfectly "selfless."

This means, all emotions are self-centered. True selflessness is not an emotion. True love is selfless. It is called *metta* the universal benevolence, which is the absence of lust, hate, and the delusion of self. When *metta* is fully developed it results in *karuna*, which is universal compassion, where there is no distinction between oneself and others. Others become as important as one-self, to the person with *karuna*, just as a mother thinks of her only child. Here one loses oneself in the interest in all beings. Therefore proper development of compassion results in the freedom from unhappiness called *mudita*, which is the happiness of selflessness. This happiness is not an emotional excitement. It is a state of tranquility of mind, of peaceful happiness, which is introverted rather than extroverted. This means this happiness is not dependent on external circumstances. This introverted state of mind also facilitates introspection *upekkha*. Introspection facilitates apperception (*abhinna*), which is the awareness of "experience" (meaning: how we perceive) instead of "existence" (meaning: what we perceive). By "experience" we mean the process by which we become aware of what we perceive. This helps one awaken from the dream of existence, through a paradigm shift from "existence" to "experience."

[Sense Values](#)

SENSE OF VALUES

All human beings have a sense of values. They have different ideas of what is good or great or superior. And according to each person's sense of values, each person will feel inferior, superior or equal. If a person thinks that wealth is superior, then the moment this person meets a wealthier person, he/she begins to feel inferior. If a person thinks that high social position is superior, he/she will feel inferior in the presence of any person who is greater in social position. Likewise, if a person thinks that popularity is the greatest thing; that person begins to feel inferior upon meeting a person who is more popular than himself or herself. If a person thinks that enjoying sensual pleasure is the greatest thing, then that person will feel inferior in the presence of some one who is enjoying more sensual pleasures. This is how people feel inferior or superior. This worldly sense of values was shown by the Buddha to be not only unhealthy but it also brings unhappiness, disappointment, frustration, sorrow, pain, anxieties, and worry.

The Buddha pointed out that happiness is to be sought not outside in wealth, status, popularity or sensual pleasures; but rather, inside in peace of mind. This happiness within is inner peace, calm or tranquility of mind. If one can understand that inner peace is the greatest thing in the world, then one will automatically begin to seek inner peace. When one meets a calm person, one does not feel inferior any more, but one begins to appreciate the person and one is inspired. When we are really convinced that calmness is the greatest thing, we do not need tranquilizers. Tranquilizers are needed only when we are not convinced that calmness is the greatest thing, because then our goal is not calmness. It is the goal, based on our sense of values that determines our calmness.

It is our sense of values therefore that makes us calm or not calm. You have heard the word “*Nirvāna*” or “*Nibbāna*” which is regarded as the ultimate goal of the Buddhist. Some think that Nirvāna is some kind of Heaven but that is not what Nirvāna is. **Nirvāna** simply means the **Imperturbable Serenity of mind**. (*nir* is the negative prefix like the English “non,” and *vana* means shaking). “Nirvāna” is the tranquility of mind that is not shaken by anything, even in the face of death. It is a tranquility of mind that can never be disturbed. This is why it is called the **imperturbable serenity of mind**.

We become what we value or worship. When we understand and appreciate the value of Nirvana, it becomes our goal in life. This results in a reorientation of our life to reach this goal. Then, we do not need any special effort to attain Nirvana. Our life is automatically reorganized to reach that goal. This reorganization of life is called entering the stream (*sotāpanna*). Even if we cannot reach the end in this present life, we will reach it within seven lives.

[The Path of Stream Entry](#)

THE PATH OF STREAM ENTRY

The sequence of events that leads to stream entry is called “**The Path of Stream Entry**” (*sotāpatti anga*):

- i. Association with those who value Tranquility of mind as the highest good (*sappurisa sevana*).
- ii. Hearing about the value of Tranquility (*saddhamma savana*).
- iii. Deterministic thinking about the conditions necessary for the gaining of Tranquility (*yoniso manasikāra*).
- iv. Reorganization of life to reach the goal of Tranquility (*dhammānudhamma patipatti*).

When our perspective on life changes, our sense of values change. When our sense of values changes our goal in life changes. When our goal in life is fully established, our life reorganizes to reach this goal. Then our thoughts, speech, and actions change to fall in line with our goal. Then we don’t have to push ourselves to meditate. Meditation will automatically take place because meditation is the means to the goal we are trying to reach. Our life will automatically move towards the goal we have chosen. We do not have to make any special effort, or make any resolution to meditate. We do not need any will-power to meditate. We do not have to force ourselves to meditate. We do not need to say, “*I don’t have any time*”, or “*I have to make time*”. We will automatically have time to meditate, because that is what we want to do.

If we really want to do something, we will always have the time. It is only when we are not really interested in doing something that we do not have time for it. This means, when we have the right understanding, or harmonious perspective, we will begin to meditate automatically. Then meditation is not something we do. It becomes our way of life.

Meditation is the way of life that leads to calmness of the mind and relaxation of the body. Calmness of mind makes one happy and relaxation of body makes one comfortable. Both calmness and happiness make one kind and compassionate.

Therefore to become a Buddhist is to acquire the harmonious perspective and the right sense of values, with the belief that every human being can transcend all human weaknesses and reach the highest perfection as the Buddha did, if he/she only tried. Suffering, its cause, its end, and the way to its end, is not outside us but within us. **It is right within you** and me.

Therefore evolve, and be transformed. You too can reach **The Imperturbable Serenity of Mind**

Good luck. Enjoy. Be happy.

[Practice of Level II](#)

PRACTICE OF THE LEVEL II RETREAT

Only Three steps in the practice

- 1) Withdrawal of attention from perceptual images
- 2) Withdrawal of attention from memory images
- 3) Focusing attention on the body
 - a) Relaxing the body
 - b) Calming the breathing
 - c) Attainment of stillness of mind – Ecstasy (Jhana)

In the Beginner’s Retreat, Level-I, we focused on the Harmonious Perspective and the Harmonious Orientation, which results in Harmonious Speech, Action and Lifestyle. At this Intermediate Retreat, Level-II, we focus on the next step in the Sublime Eightfold Way, which is the **Harmonious Exercise**, which leads to the Harmonious Mental Equilibrium. This mental equilibrium achieved at this retreat, however, is temporary, because it can be lost if the mind gets polluted again, due to negligence or a lack of maintenance.

The equilibrium will remain undisturbed only when *Nibbāna* is reached, through the practice of the **Seven Steps to Awakening** (*satta bojjhanga*). This practice will be done, however, only at the Level-III Retreat. When Nirvāna is attained, one gains the tranquillity that can never be disturbed. This is why Nirvana is called the **Imperturbable Serenity of Mind** (*akuppā-ceto-vimutti*). This is also called “Equilibrium without a break” (*samādhim-ānantarika-aññamāhu*).

At the beginner’s retreat Level-I, meditation was seen as an effort to **purify the mind**, and we called our practice **Selective Thinking**. At this intermediate retreat, Level-II, meditation should be seen as an effort to **calm the mind**, and we call our practice, Cultivating **Tranquility Of Mind**. The cultivation of tranquillity is properly achieved through the Harmonious Exercise. This practice achieves two things: mental calmness and physical relaxation.

The aim of this intermediate retreat therefore is to learn to purify and quieten the mind. To purifying the mind, is to quieten the mind. The pure and quiet mind is a happy mind that also brings happiness to others. The aim of this retreat is therefore to BE A HAPPY PERSON who also BRINGS HAPPINESS TO THE WORLD.

[Practice of the Sublime Eightfold Way](#)

PRACTICE OF THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY

As already mentioned, this method of meditation is based on The Sublime Eightfold Way, as taught by the Buddha.
(KS Vol. 5: 7-9)

It is very important to understand that this technique of meditation is a method of transforming oneself from a **self-centered** personality into a **selfless** one, by following the Supernormal Eight-fold Way. There are eight steps to be followed. They are as follows:

1. Harmonious Perspective (*sammā-ditthi*)
2. Harmonious Orientation (*sammā-sankappa*)
3. Harmonious Speech (*sammā-vācā*)
4. Harmonious Action (*sammā-kammanta*)
5. Harmonious Lifestyle (*sammā-ājīva*)
6. Harmonious Exercise (*sammā-vāyāma*)
7. Harmonious Attention (*sammā-sati*)
8. Harmonious Mental Equilibrium (*sammā-samādhi*)

The first step is to acquire the harmonious perspective. The harmonious perspective is the perspective that brings about harmony internally and externally. This is a perspective, not merely a right view or a right understanding. This is a different way of looking at life, yourself, the world, and your relationship to the world. It is seeing things in a different way that does not create conflict internally or externally.

Even Charles Darwin the originator of the modern theory of evolution saw **life** as a **struggle for existence**. It needed the evolution of a Buddha to realize that this struggle was only a **mistake**, for it was **an effort to be permanent in an impermanent world**. This struggle, however, occurred quite unconsciously and deterministically. No one was responsible for it. Even after the evolution of the thinking human being, this futile effort is continued quite unconsciously through blind emotions. This struggle stands out in the human being as a conflict between blind emotions and the rational intelligence that is aware of reality. It needed the evolution of a Buddha, however, to see this mistake and realize that the cause of the problem was the blind emotions that clashed with the reality conceived by intelligence. This distressful conflict is what the Buddha called suffering (*dukkha*).

There are three kinds of conflict that emotions come up with:

1. With nature
2. With people
3. With reason

It was to resolve this conflict by eliminating the blind emotions that the Buddha found this Sublime Eightfold Way.

[The Harmonious Perspective](#)

The Harmonious Perspective (*sammā-ditthi*)

This perspective is to become aware of:

- i. **The insecurity of life** (*dukkha*)
- ii. The **cause** of this **insecurity** (*samudaya*)
- iii. The **end** of this **insecurity** (*nirodha*)
- iv. The **way to end this insecurity** (*magga*).

The insecurity of life was what Siddhata Gotama, the Bodhisatta, realized more than twentyfive centuries ago, when he saw the old man, the sick man, and the dead corpse. In modern times, the Western philosophy called Existentialism has dramatically drawn attention to this problem. Yet no one so far has been able to solve this problem in the modern world. It was only the Buddha, 25 centuries ago in the East, who found the solution by awakening from the dream of existence. He found the way to immortality and revealed it to the world, but only those with ears to hear, and only those with a little dust in their eyes, could listen and be free from death. He set out to enlighten the world, beating the drum of immortality (*amata dundubin*), with the words:

“Open is the door to immortality
For those who have ears to hear
Listen to my sound and be free from death.”

The sound is still ringing –)))
Only those who pay attention will hear
Only those with little dust in their eyes will see

Of course some thinkers have found an escape from this stark reality of death in a fantastic dream world, called Heaven, where there is eternal life and eternal happiness after death, even though this fantasy is far beyond verifiable certainty, until death intervenes – to put the fact beyond any doubt.

The Buddha, on the other hand, sought a real solution to the real problem within reality itself, instead of escaping into a fantasy beyond certainty. He examined the existential problem of death here and now to find a solution here and now. His aim was to find the cause of the problem, and to solve the problem by eliminating the cause.

What he discovered was that the cause of the problem, and its solution, was to be found within us and not outside. The cause was our blind emotions that come in conflict with the reality perceived through our intellect. This conflict that caused

much suffering could be resolved only by eliminating these blind emotions. Elimination of emotions could be achieved only by finding the conditions essential for the arousal of emotions.

He discovered that these emotions are aroused deterministically, and therefore it was only by eliminating one of the necessary conditions that the emotional arousal could be stopped. Such an elimination of emotions was a transcendence of normal human nature, and the realization of a Supernormal Consciousness. This realization also resulted in a **paradigm shift** from the notion of “**personal existence**” to the notion of “**impersonal experience**,” ending in **absolute selflessness**.

It is to achieve this **transcendence** that Buddhist meditation is practiced at Level III by the monastic followers. The lay Buddhist leading a secular life can also benefit from this practice, however, because it helps one learn to gain control over the emotions that stand as an obstacle to peaceful living.

Those who understand that emotion is the culprit that stands responsible for the sufferings of life, begin to eliminate emotion at every nook and cranny. This is what begins the important reorientation of life.

Harmonious Orientation

Harmonious Orientation (*sammā-sankappa*)

This is the reorganization of one’s life, by turning in a new direction, recognizing the value of calmness of mind. It is to turn towards calmness or freedom from emotional excitements, as the solution to the problem of life. This U-turn in life has to be taken by visualizing and appreciating the harmonious goal, which is calmness. This reorientation can occur only if one understands the danger, futility and mental confusion resulting from the pursuit of sensual pleasure, and the advantage of the pursuit of renunciation, relaxation, and tranquility of mind. In the present age, this can also be seen as the understanding of the meaning and value of stress management.

Relaxation and tranquility must be seen as the medial path between self-indulgence and self-denial. It is the way to true goodness, happiness, and wisdom. Commonly people see happiness as the gratification of emotional impulses. They see goodness as the denial of emotional impulses. Therefore being good is the opposite of being happy. This is why people prefer to be happy than to be good. They hate to be good. They even look down upon people who try to be good because they see them as cowards, who fear to gratify their emotions out of a feeling of guilt, or fear of punishment. People who often prefer to appear to be good are those who have been brought up under strict discipline during childhood. Such people often become criminals when they grow up to show off their power.

People who turn to be bad to show off their power were shown by the Buddha that goodness is not denial of emotions and bad is not gratification of emotions. He pointed out that goodness is the way to happiness and badness is the way to unhappiness. He pointed out that gratification of emotions is not the way to happiness; nor is it the suppression of emotions or even repression. Happiness is the complete elimination of emotions. He pointed out that emotions can be eliminated and there is nothing wrong in doing so. It only makes one transcend the normal emotional level of being. It is rising up to a supernormal level, which is called the Sublime (*ariya*) level.

Self-indulgence (*kāma sukhallikānu yoga*) is being carried away by emotional impulses, and self-denial (*atta kilamatānu yoga*) is the attempt to conquer the flesh by flagellation and other methods of self-torture. Avoiding these two extremes the Buddha pointed out a medial way to deal with emotions. Instead of expressing emotions in action or even suppressing or repressing emotions, one can learn to relax the body and calm the mind.

What this means is, every emotional arousal creates muscular tension in the body. This tension makes the body uncomfortable. It is to get rid of this discomfort that the body releases tension in action, quite unconsciously, to obtain what is desired, or to get rid of what is hated, or to run away from what is feared, or even weep when nothing can be done. Every emotional action is an unconscious release of tension. If this is so, instead of unconsciously releasing tension in action, we can always learn to consciously relax the tension and be happy all the time. Happiness therefore is none other than the relaxed state of the body and the tranquil state of the mind.

Emotion is a disturbance of the body caused by the pictures we hold in the mind. By learning to relax the body, and to hold calming images in the mind, it is possible to free the mind of emotional disturbances. This means visualizing calmness is the medial way between expression and suppression or repression of emotions to overcome emotions. To visualize calmness, is to make calmness the goal towards which we move.

It is also helpful to understand the distinction between pleasure and happiness. Pleasure is derived from the stimulation of the senses, where as happiness is the undisturbed tranquility of mind. It is only when one has understood that calmness is the only true value of life that the body and mind will become reorganized to reach this goal.

Pursuit of calmness is the medial path between the pursuit of pleasure and the pursuit of goodness. Being carried away by emotions is the pursuit of pleasure (*kāma sukhallikānu yoga*). Attempting to suppress the emotions is the pursuit of goodness (*atta kilamatānu yoga*). Learning to relax is the pursuit of calm or tranquility of mind (*adhi cittanu yoga*), or the pursuit of the Supernormal Mind – NIRVANA.

This means, when properly oriented, we begin to gain control over our emotions, instead of being carried away by them, and we begin to act rationally. In other words, we begin to stop reacting to situations in life, and start responding to them. A reaction is unconscious and emotional, while a response is conscious and rational. This means we think, feel, and act

rationally instead of emotionally, which is to maintain a good disposition that maintains happiness within oneself, as well as in others, wherever we go.

This is the perfect orientation, which is to be oriented towards the new and supreme goal of **imperturbable serenity of mind** (*akuppā-ceto-vimutti*), called Nirvāna. This healthy orientation results in the withdrawal from bad dispositions and the cultivation of good dispositions.

Bad Disposition	Good Disposition
1. Passionate	1. Dispassionate
2. Angry	2. Loving
3. Cruel	3. Kind

With this healthy orientation comes a complete reorganization of one's life, where one's speech, action, and lifestyle changes to calm and composed way of life that is pleasant to oneself as well as to all others that one encounters.

Harmonious Speech

1) **Harmonious Speech** (*sammā-vācā*)

This is speech that does not create conflict between oneself and others, but instead creates happiness wherever one goes.

Bad Speech	Good Speech
1. Dishonesty in speech	1. Honesty in speech
2. Disloyalty in speech	2. Loyalty in speech
3. Discourteous in speech	3. Courteous speech
4. Harmful, idle speech	4. Harmless, helpful speech

Harmonious Action

2) **Harmonious Action** (*sammā-kammanta*)

This is our behaviour that is always pleasant to ourselves as well as to others.

Bad Action	Good Action
1. Disrespect for living-beings	1. Respect for living-beings
2. Plundering other's property	2. No Plundering other's property
3. Immoral sensual enjoyment	3. Moral sensual enjoyment

Harmonious Lifestyle

3) **Harmonious Lifestyle** (*sammā-ājīva*)

Here we are referring to our lifestyle, more than the jobs we do to earn a living, or our occupation. The harmonious life style is the unselfish, friendly, honest, compassionate, and tolerant way of living that is helpful but not harmful to anyone in the world. This is the automatic consequence of the harmonious disposition. It is possible to speak good words or do good actions occasionally but have a bad life style, where one gets angry and greedy often, and even being hated by others for one's behaviour. If one has a good life style one will always be good, honest and helpful, and will be loved by everyone.

When a person has successfully completed the practice up to this point, he has become a stream entrant (*sotā panna*). A stream entrant is one who has entered the stream. The stream is the Sublime Eightfold Way. This is the stream that

ultimately falls into the ocean – Nirvana. To become a stream entrant one has to break three, out of the ten bonds that bind one to existence or being (*bhava*). These three bonds are:

- Personality perspective (*sakkaya ditthi*)
- Cognitive dissonance (*vicikicca*)
- Heteronomous morality (*silabbata paramasa*)

The personality perspective is broken when one has understood the **Fourfold Sublime Reality**, which is the understanding of the **insecurity of life**, its **cause**, its **end**, and the way to its end. When this has been understood in the proper way, the “notion of self” is intellectually discarded, because the Buddha pointed out that the insecurity, in short, consists of the five personalized gatherings (*panca-upādānakkhanda*): images, feelings, sensations, constructions, and perceptions. The five gatherings are intellectually depersonalized at this point. Yet the emotional “sense of self” still remains. Though one understands that it is wrong, the “feeling of self” still remains.

The cognitive dissonance is due to the emotions and reason being at loggerheads: reasoning indicates that there is no “self,” but emotion feels the “self.” This dissonance is experienced even in the behaviour. One intellectually accepts the five precepts as good behaviour and even sets out to practice it, but when overcome by anger or lust one breaks the virtuosity.

Heteronomous morality is when one behaves morally only to please others or because others or the law wants one to be moral. Even morality based on obedience to God is not free from this allegation. The stream entrant is the only one who is free from this error because he has understood the need for morality, which is to establish peace and happiness within oneself as well in the world outside.

The practice up to this point is the work of the beginner’s retreat, Level I.

[Harmonious Exercise](#)

4) Harmonious Exercise (*sammā-vāyāma*)

It is here that the intermediate retreat begins. It is the systematic effort to purify the mind. When this exercise is successfully completed, the purified mind enters the first ecstasy (*jhana*), which is followed by the second, third, and fourth.

This exercise comprises four parts:

- Prevention** (*samvara*),
- Elimination** (*pahāna*),
- Cultivation** (*bhāvanā*), and
- Maintenance** (*anurakkhana*).

[Prevention](#)

I) Prevention (*Samvara*)

The impurities enter the mind through the senses. They enter when we focus our attention on the sensory objects. To **prevent** this we withdraw our attention from sensory objects, which is to stop reflecting on the pleasantness or the unpleasantness of the object. This is called guarding the senses. Let us examine the words of the Buddha in translation, as it is found in the Sutta.

Herein, a meditator, seeing an image with the eye, is not preoccupied with what is seen or with what is associated with it, so that attraction, repulsion and evil, unprofitable states of mind may not flow into the mind, as it would if one dwelled with this eye-faculty uncontrolled, and did not apply oneself to such control, or set guard over the eye-faculty.

Hearing a sound with the ear, or smelling an odour with the nose, or tasting a savour with the tongue, or contacting tangibles with the body, or cognising mental states with the mind, one is not preoccupied with their general features, or by their associations so that attraction, repulsion and evil,

unprofitable states of mind may not flow upon one, as it would, if one dwelled with ones ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind uncontrolled and did not apply oneself to such control, or set guard over these faculties.

This, in fact, is a withdrawal of attention from what ever is perceived through the senses. It is closing our mind to external objects perceived. This way we are being free of disturbances within due to environmental influences. In other words, we are preventing the mind from being polluted by forces coming from outside. This way we also stop reacting to stimulation of the senses by the environment.

[Elimination](#)

II) Elimination (*Pahāna*)

Elimination is the removal of bad thoughts that have already arisen in the mind. If after the practice of prevention as above, any emotional excitement remains in the mind, it is due to carrying a memory of something that happened in the past, which produces the emotional excitement. This is called carrying a “memory image.” The emotional excitement can be removed by **withdrawing** our attention away from this memory image.

In order to do so we may begin to focus our mind on a different image, which is the opposite of the present image. For example if the original image was the image of an enemy, we can focus our attention on the image of a friend. If that is difficult we can make a telephone call to that friend and speak to the friend. If a telephone is not available, we can write a letter to the friend, even if we may not mail it. If the friend is available close by, we can even visit the friend and speak to the friend. This is the kind of help a counsellor can give to a disturbed client.

This is analogous to watching a television program and upon seeing unwholesome content appearing, one changes the television channel to another channel with more wholesome content.

The *Vitakka-santhana Sutta* of the *Majjimanikaya*, which was given in translation in the book on Level I meditation shows five methods of dealing with this problem. Reference to this passage may be helpful at this stage. Let us now refer to the instructions given by the Buddha about elimination.

“Herein a Bhikkhu does not accept a sensual thought, a malign thought, or cruel thought that has arisen from memory, but rejects it, expels it, makes an end of it, drives it out of renewed occurrence. One does not admit evil, unprofitable states of mind that arise from time to time, from memory, but rejects them, expels them, makes an end of them, and drives them out of renewed occurrence.”

If one practices the above two exercises – **Prevention** (*samvara*), **Elimination** (*pahāna*) conscientiously, it is possible that at least the first Ecstasy (*jhāna*) can be reached yet this purity of mind is only temporary. It can be polluted, and therefore it is unstable. It is only by practicing the next two exercises **Cultivation** (*bhāvanā*), and **Maintenance** (*anurakkhana*) that it can be brought to the point that it can never be polluted.

The sequence of events that lead to Ecstasy (*jhāna*):

1. When one practices conscientiously (*appamattassa viharatō*)
2. One begins to experience a feeling of joy (*pāmujjaṅ jāyati*)
3. Joy develops into rapture (*pāmuḍitassa pīti jāyati*)
4. When mentally rapturous, the body relaxes (*pīti manassa kāyaṅ passambhati*)
5. The relaxed body feels comfortable (*passaddha kāyo sukhaṅ vēdiyati*)
6. When the body is comfortable the mind is in equilibrium (*sukhino cittaṅ samādhīyati*). This is ecstasy (*jhāna*).
7. When the mind is in equilibrium, Dhamma appears. (*samāhite citte dhammaṅ pātubhavo*) This means, the mind begins to understand how things come to be (*samāhite cite yathabhutaṅ pajanati*). Equilibrium brings about introspection This is to focus on how one experiences, instead of on what one experiences. This is a paradigm shift from **existence** to **experience**. In other words, the mind becomes aware of the principle of “determinism” (*paticca samuppada*).

Cultivation

III) Cultivation (*Bhāvanā*)

This part of the exercise will be emphasised only at the advanced retreat because this is the cultivation of the “Seven Steps to Awakening” (*sapta bojjhanga*), which is the main practice at the advanced retreat.

Cultivation is the systematic cultivation of calm introspection unhindered by emotional arousal. This is achieved by firstly withdrawing attention from external objects and memories, as it was done at the first two exercises above, and secondly focusing attention on the experience within, which is the emotional reaction to external objections and memories. This means focusing attention on the emotional reaction to an object, rather than focusing attention on an object to which one reacts. This will also be practiced during this retreat, although the main focus on this practice will be at the Level III retreat.

The reaction to the object, which we focus on in this exercise, is in four stages:

1. Physical manifestation of the reaction in the body – (*kāyaṅ passana*)
2. Sensual manifestation of the reaction as a feeling in the body – (*vedanaṅ passana*)
3. Affective manifestation of the reaction as anger, fear, or lust – (*cittaṅ passana*)
4. Cognitive manifestation of the reaction as the interpretation of circumstances – (*dhammaṅ passana*)

In observing the reaction, we first observe the active phase or the physical manifestation of the reaction. It can be seen as movements of the body, the movement of breathing, and tension in the body.

Next we observe the reaction as sensations in the body such as comfortable, uncomfortable or neutral sensations. Tension is felt as an uncomfortable sensation. Relaxation is felt as a comfortable sensation. All movements of the body can be felt as neutral sensations.

Thirdly we observe the emotional states or moods (*citta*). We watch for the kind of emotion carried in the mood? Is it anger, fear, lust, or worry?

At the fourth stage we observe the thought that started the emotion. It is the thought that interpreted and gave meaning to what occurred outside in a particular circumstance. That meaning is what started the emotion. That is what needs to be seen and changed.

At first we change the mood by broadening our mind. This means we begin to see the other person’s point of view, or inquire into other possible ways of interpreting the same situation. This is taking a broader perspective.

As we advance, however, we begin to become aware of the fact that our interpretation is only a concept and not a truth. We begin to examine how a concept is formed. As our mind calms down, we are able to observe the process of perception, by which we form the concept. We then realize that there are no truths in the world other than mere concepts, which may be logical or illogical. Even a logical concept is only a concept and not a truth. Therefore we do not need to take any concept too seriously. There are only good concepts and bad concepts. Good concepts bring happiness to oneself and others, and bad concepts bring unhappiness to oneself and others.

The 7 Steps in Awakening

The seven steps in awakening (*satta bojjhanga*):

- 1) Introversion of Attention (*sati*)
- 2) Observation of Experience (*dhamma vicaya*)
- 3) Strength (*viriya*)
- 4) Rapture (*pīti*)
- 5) Relaxation (*passaddhi*)
- 6) Mental Equilibrium (*samādhi*)
- 7) Introspection (*upekkhā*)

“Herein a meditator cultivates the seven steps towards awakening (*satta bojjhanga*) that begins with **Introversion of Attention** (*sati*), which can only be achieved through solitude (*viveka*), dispassion (*virāga*), and discontinuance (*nirodha*) ending in liberation (*vossagga*).

Then one cultivates the step towards awakening that is **Conscious Observation of Experience** (*dhamma vicaya*) associated with solitude, dispassion, and discontinuance, ending in liberation.

Then one cultivates the step towards awakening that is **Strength** (*viriya*) associated with solitude, dispassion, and discontinuance, ending in liberation.

One cultivates the step towards awakening that is **Rapture** (*pīti*) associated with solitude, dispassion, and discontinuance, ending in liberation.

One cultivates the step towards awakening that is **Relaxation** (*passaddhi*) associated with solitude, dispassion, and discontinuance, ending in liberation.

One cultivates the step towards awakening that is **Mental Equilibrium** (*samādhi*) associated with solitude, dispassion, and discontinuance, ending in liberation.

One cultivates the step towards awakening that is **Introspection** (*upekkhā*) associated with solitude, dispassion, and discontinuance, ending in liberation.”

(*Bojjhanga Samyutta*)

Maintenance

IV) Maintenance (*Anurakkhana*)

The effort to **maintain** the state of calm and relaxation is the effort to keep focusing on what is going on within the body and the mind, instead of focusing on external objects. What is going on within is the reaction to the object perceived. This inward focus must be maintained through out the day.

When we focus on external objects we react to them. When we take our attention away from them, the reaction stops and we calm down. When we become constantly conscious of the reaction, the stop is maintained because it cannot go on consciously. This is because the reaction can occur only unconsciously.

This practice has to be done every moment in our lives, while we are in the four postures:

1. Walking
2. Standing
3. Sitting
4. Lying down

In other words, it is to be done every moment during the waking life, from the time one wakes up till one falls asleep. As one keeps on practising this way, the mind calms down and the body relaxes. The practice turns into a habit. This results in mental happiness and physical comfort. This tranquil state of mind and body can be developed into the first ecstasy. This state of deep tranquillity could be further developed gradually into the Four Ecstasies (*jhāna*).

When one enters the fourth ecstasy by maintaining this purity and tranquility of mind, the mind becomes focused internally (*upekkha*). Then it becomes possible for the meditator to become aware of how one perceives, or the process of perception itself, in the form of the five accumulations (*panca khanda*):

1. Feelings (*Vedanā*)
2. Sensations (*Saññā*)
3. Mental Constructions (*Sankhāra*)
4. Perceptions (*Viññāna*)
5. Mental Images (*Rūpa*)

When the accumulations are perceived, what one perceives are the stages in the process of perception, which are commonly personalized as “mine.” The subjective process of perception is normally personalized while the object of perception is normally alienated as not mine.

Insight is gained when one is able to recognize that these stages in the process of perception are dependent on conditions and are therefore impersonal processes. This way one begins to see the impersonality of all phenomena. Then one begins to see that personalization of these impersonal phenomena only leads to suffering. It is in this way that the value of depersonalization is recognized. This makes one dispassionate and thereby one loses one’s personality perspective.

Although one has lost one’s personality perspective, one is still aware of one’s “feeling of self” that accompanies tension in the muscles and sensations that arise from them. Though there is no real “self” the “feeling of self” is still present. This is due to emotions that produce tensions. The constant awareness and observation of these feelings of self associated with emotions and tension helps one gradually reduce the “feeling of self.” From here on it becomes a constant awareness of emotions and the “feeling of self.” This leads to constant relaxed happy living, and good pleasant behaviour, which also brings happiness to others around.

[Harmonious Attention](#)

5) Harmonious Attention (*sammā-sati*)

Harmonious attention is not mere “mindfulness,” where one pays attention to whatever one does or perceives. It is **withdrawing** attention from **objects perceived** through the senses, and **focusing** attention on the **emotional reaction** to the object perceived, which is going on inside the body, and not outside. The real meaning of the term *satipatthana* (*sati+upatthana*) is the withdrawal of attention from external surroundings and focusing attention on what is going on inside (*parimukan satīṇ upatthapetva*).

It is important to understand the purpose of our meditation, which is to stop reacting emotionally to what we perceive. We must understand that this reaction is going on unconsciously. A desire or hatred that comes up is not a conscious action we perform. It happens without our knowing how it occurred. This “harmonious attention” is to become conscious of the unconscious reaction, so that the **unconscious** reaction stops when made **conscious**.

We must understand that we are **organisms** in an **environment**. The organism reacts quite unconsciously to stimulation by the environment. This reaction creates a conflict between the organism and the environment. This **conflict** is the distress or **insecurity** (*dukkha*) that the Buddha spoke of, and that we all suffer from. Our aim is to **resolve this conflict** and bring about **harmony** through the “harmonious attention.”

So this harmonious attention is keeping the attention focused inwards or introverted, so that we become aware of the reaction that is going on within us. This reaction consists of four parts: 1) perception, 2) interpretation, 3) emotional arousal, 4) and action to release tension.

But we can become aware of it only in four other stages, starting from the body rather than the mind, which are:

1. Body awareness (*kāya anupassanā*).

This is awareness of what is going on in the body, in the form of the heart beating, hands shaking, muscle tension, rapid breathing, perspiration, etc.

2. Sensation awareness (*vedanā anupassanā*)

This is awareness of how one feels in the body, whether comfortable or uncomfortable.

3. Mood awareness (*citta anupassanā*)

This is awareness of the emotion present in the mood, or the calmness of the mood, or whatever be the nature of the mood.

4. Thought awareness (*dhamma anupassanā*)

This is awareness of the thoughts that interpreted one’s circumstances, to which one reacted or not.

The fourfold exercise (*sammāpādhāna*), when practiced diligently, purifies and tranquilizes the mind and brings the mind to a state of equilibrium or mental repose (*samādhi*).

“Here the meditator abides seeing the body as body, diligent, aware and attentive avoiding the attraction and repulsion associated with objects perceived.

One abides seeing sensations as sensations, diligent, aware and attentive avoiding the attraction and repulsion associated with objects perceived.

One abides seeing emotions as emotions, diligent, aware and attentive avoiding the attraction and repulsion associated with objects perceived.

One abides seeing thoughts as thoughts, diligent, aware and attentive avoiding the attraction and repulsion associated with objects perceived.”

(*Satipatthāna Sutta*)

[Breathing Meditation](#)

Breathing Meditation (*ānāpāna sati*)

This is the method of maintaining and developing the tranquility so far attained. This is not an exercise in concentration but one of relaxation of body and calming the mind. When the body is relaxed and the mind is calmed down, attention automatically goes to the breathing. We watch the breathing to find out the extent to which we are agitated or calm.

Breathing is like a biofeedback machine that gives us feedback as to our degree of tranquility. The aim should be to relax the breathing.

By relaxing the breathing, we relax the whole body and we calm the mind.
By learning to pay attention to breathing, we can calm the body as well as the mind.

Keep relaxing the breathing. Let go of your whole body as you breathe out, as if you are dropping a weight that you were carrying. Let the breath come in freely as if you are opening the gate or canal for water to rush in.

Remember you are not trying to concentrate on the breathing. You are focusing your attention on the whole body in general. Your attention should be on the experience of the body from within. Observe the sensations of discomfort and comfort that indicate tensions and relaxation in the body. The breathing is only an activity of the body. Continue attention to the breathing in relation to the body in this way till your body relaxes gradually and the mind calms down. When the mind is tranquil and purified, you begin to experience happiness. When the mind is happy, the body relaxes further and you feel more comfortable. With this experience of comfort comes perfect stillness of mind.

The mind that runs about in search of happiness stops running when there is happiness experienced within. Try to maintain this state of happiness, comfort and stillness as long as possible. At first you might experience this tranquil state of mind only for a moment and then it might disappear. With practice, it begins to stay longer and longer. When it remains sufficiently long, you are in the first “jhāna” or first level of tranquility.

This is the cultivation of inner calm that is necessary before one can practice insight meditation to gain the insight that frees one from all suffering forever. This insight is not seeing “lights,” or seeing pictures but becoming aware of the process of experiencing the Five Accumulations (*pancakkhanda*) and the **Antecedental Concurrence** of the components of experience (*paticca-samuppāda*), which leads to the depersonalization of experience. This when properly achieved leads to awakening from the dream of existence.

[Attention to Breathing](#)

Attention to Breathing (*ānāpāna sati*)

Attention to breathing is commonly practiced today, as an exercise in concentration, but as it was taught by the Buddha it was not an exercise in concentration. It was an exercise in relaxation. By learning to relax the breathing, one can relax the entire body. When the body is relaxed, the mind calms down. When the mind is calmed, the mind and body are free from emotional agitation. As emotional disturbance disappears, the mind attains a state of equilibrium (*samādhi*). *Samādhi* is not concentration as commonly translated, it is **equilibrium** of the mind and body (*sama* = equal; *dhi* = the state). It is a state of mental and physical balance, or stillness of mind and body. Concentration implies tension and effort, whereas equilibrium is a state of rest and relaxation.

The purpose of *Samādhi* is to rest the mind or stop the activity called mind. Mind is not an entity different from the body. It is merely an activity of the body, which is mainly the activity of the nervous system, consisting of the brain, the spinal cord, the nerves and the senses. In fact, the entire body is involved in this activity called mind, just as the entire engine is involved in its activity.

Samādhi is a gradual stopping of this activity called mind, until it comes to an entire stop. This was what the Buddha achieved. After having stopped the mind, he restarted it. It was when he restarted it that he awoke from the dream of existence, and thus became a Buddha. Details of this will be discussed later but at this point we only need to know that what we call the mind is just an activity of the body. Therefore achieving tranquility of mind is nothing but stilling the activity.

[Stages in the In and Out Breathing](#)

Stages in the In and Out Breathing (*ānāpāna sati*) Meditation

(MS Vol. III: 121-129)

1. Sit with your back straight
2. Withdraw your attention from external objects
3. Withdraw your attention from memories
4. Focus your attention on the subjective experience, which means look at your body from inside, in terms of how you feel the body.
5. Observe your inhalations and exhalations as they come and go, as you feel them.
6. Notice the length of your inhalations and exhalations.
7. Notice the feeling in your entire body, as you breathe in and out
8. Relaxing this bodily activity, breathe in and out. Relaxing is not doing anything, but not doing.
9. Experiencing rapture, breathe in and out
10. Experiencing the comfort of relaxation, breathe in and out
11. Observing the mental activity, breathe in and out
12. Calming the mental activity, breathe in and out
13. Being aware of the mood, breathe in and out
14. Super gladdening the mood, breathe in and out
15. Resting the mood, breathe in and out
16. Liberating the mood, breathe in and out

17. Observing instability, breathe in and out
18. Observing dispassion, breathe in and out
19. Observing termination, breathe in and out
20. Observing freedom, breathe in and out

It should be noted that the above description does not refer to concentration on the breathing, but to a constantly changing focus as you breathe in and out, while you relax the body and tranquillize the mind more and more. Finally, it leads to insight, and freedom.

Awareness of breathing gives feedback regarding the level of excitement and tension in the body, thus helping to relax and maintain calmness. This is the meaning of the practice of awareness of breathing in and out (*ānāpāna sati*).

Harmonious Mental Equilibrium

6) Harmonious Mental Equilibrium (*sammā-samādhi*)

There are four levels of Tranquility or ecstasy (*jhāna*), in the cultivation of the four levels of ecstasy (*jhāna*). Before we begin, it is important to distinguish between ecstasy and the hypnotic state.

The hypnotic state is the result of concentration. It is a state of mind, which is midway between waking and sleeping. One can easily get into this state through lethargy and drowsiness (*thīna middha*) when meditating. Often this is mistaken for *samādhi* or *jhāna*.

Ecstasy (*jhāna*) is a state where the body is fully relaxed and the mind is fully awake and alert. With full awareness one experiences a state of mental bliss and bodily ease, free of emotional excitements and tensions. The first ecstasy has five parts to it as mentioned above, viz: inference (*vitakka*), inquiry (*vicara*), rapture (*pīti*), comfort (*sukha*), and stillness of mind (*ekaggatā*). There are four different levels of tranquility, as follows:

1. First ecstasy – inference, inquiry, rapture, comfort, stillness
2. Second ecstasy – rapture, comfort, stillness
3. Third ecstasy – comfort, stillness
4. Fourth ecstasy – stillness, introspection

These are called ecstasies because ecstasy means, “standing out.” It is standing out of the sensual world. What we call the world is only an experience. The normal experience of the human being is a sensual and emotional experience. When one enters the first ecstasy, one stands out of this sensual and emotional experience.

In the ecstasy, the mind is focussed within and free from all emotional disturbances. Entering the different levels of tranquillity is a gradual withdrawal from the emotional level that experiences a world outside. It is a gradual reduction of the experience of the sensual world. The world or experience that one enters in this ecstasy is sometimes seen as the spiritual world.

Some even see it as entering heaven. Others call it union with God. We, however, call it simple ecstasy, which is a gradual emptying of the mind, or reduction of experience, or a **gradual stopping of the activity called “mind.”**

As the Sutta says: “Having withdrawn from carnal desires and evil states of mind, one enters the First Ecstasy (*jhāna*) consisting of inquiry (*vicara*) and inference (*vitakka*), rapture (*pīti*), comfort (*sukha*), and stillness (*ekaggatā*).

Then by giving up inquiry (*vicara*) and inference (*vitakka*), one enters the Second Ecstasy (*jhāna*) consisting of rapture (*pīti*), comfort (*sukha*), and stillness (*ekaggatā*).

Then one enters the Third Ecstasy (*jhāna*), having given up rapture (*pīti*), while comfort (*sukha*), and stillness (*ekaggatā*) remain.

Then one enters the Fourth Ecstasy (*jhāna*) having given up comfort (*sukha*), while stillness (*ekaggatā*) and introspection (*upekkhā*) remains.

ECSTASY (JHĀNA):

A Gradual Reduction of Experience

FIRST JHĀNA	SECOND JHĀNA	THIRD JHĀNA	FOURTH JHĀNA
<i>Vicara</i> (inquiry)			
<i>Vitakka</i> (inference)			
<i>Pīti</i> (rapture)	<i>Pīti</i> (rapture)		
<i>Sukha</i> (comfort)	<i>Sukha</i> (comfort)	<i>Sukha</i> (comfort)	
<i>Ekaggatā</i> (mental-stillness)	<i>Ekaggatā</i> (mental-stillness)	<i>Ekaggatā</i> (mental-stillness)	<i>Ekaggatā</i> (mental-stillness)

As indicated above, this is a gradual reduction of experience through relaxation of body and calmness of mind. This meditation is not something that a person does. If one attempts to do something, like concentration, the effort would only lead to the hypnotic state. One has to remain passive, not active. It is only a matter of relaxation, which is doing nothing. The ecstasy has to happen through a gradual series of withdrawals or letting go of experience.

The ecstasy reached during the steps to awakening (*bojjhanga*) is the ecstasy from which one never returns below the First Ecstasy (*samadhi-anantarika- aññamahu*). This is the level of purity where one's mind is never polluted again. It is the purity of mind attained to by an Arahant or Buddha

[End of the Sublime Eightfold Way](#)

END OF THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY

The retreat Level II begins and ends with the development of the Harmonious Exercise. Level III begins at the development of Harmonious Attention. In order to move on to the Level-III Retreat, however, one has to experience at least the First Ecstasy (*pathamañ jhāna*).

“Develop mental equilibrium (*samadhi*), Oh! Bhikkhus. One, whose mind is in equilibrium, is aware of how things come to be (*samāhite citta yathā bhutañ pajānāti*)”
(SN. Vol. V - 414)

There is no **ecstasy** (*jhāna*) without **insight** (*pañña*)
There is no **insight** (*pañña*) without **ecstasy** (*jhāna*)
One with both **ecstasy** (*jhāna*) and **insight** (*pañña*),
Is very **close** to Nibbāna.

(*Dhammapada* verse #372)

This is clear evidence that, according to the Buddha, there cannot be insight without mental equilibrium (*samādhi*).

[Practice Relaxation the Buddhist Way](#)

Practice relaxation the Buddhist way

Relaxation is the opposite of tension in the muscles. It is the absence of tensions. Relaxation feels comfortable while tension is uncomfortable. Relaxation also calms the breathing. Relaxation of body and calmness of breathing makes the mind calm and happy. The calm and happy mind is also kind to others. Such a body and mind is also attractive to others. Such a person is skilful at work and efficient. This means it improves not only personality and character, but also competence.

Relaxation is practiced through exercises we do in the morning. These exercises not only help one understand what relaxation is through one's own experience, but also help one remain relaxed throughout the day. This means one can be free from emotional disturbances throughout one's life if practiced conscientiously.

[Tranquility of Mind](#)

Tranquility of mind

Tranquility is achieved partly by relaxation of the body and partly by holding good images in the mind. The best image to hold in the mind is the image of the Buddha. The body of the Buddha is not present today to behold, we can only imagine the Buddha as a person who is perfectly calm and relaxed. We can also look at a well-painted picture of the Buddha or a statue of the Buddha that depicts the peaceful serenity of the Buddha. We could also imagine the Dhamma as the teaching about tranquility of mind and relaxation of body. We can imagine the Sangha as the followers who are practicing calmness and relaxation. We can also be inspired by group support while practicing calmness and relaxation ourselves, along with others.

[How to Still the Mind](#)

How to still the mind

In order to understand how one can evolve consciously and learn to still the mind, we have to learn about the mind. The mind as the Buddha saw it is not an entity different from the body. The mind is an activity of the body. Just as an activity of an engine differs from the engine, so the mind as an activity differs from the entity called body. Both body and mind are experiences. We are able to experience the body as well as the mind. The body is an objective experience while the mind is a subjective experience. The body does many activities. But what we call the mind is the activity of the nervous system. There are three kinds of activities of the body, which the Buddha referred to as mind: Perception (*viññana*), conception or cognition (*mano*), and the emotional mood or affection (*citta*).

This means, our mind has two main sections: one is affective and the other is the cognitive. The perceptual section comes under the cognitive. The cognitive section has two aspects: visual and verbal. We use both aspects in our thinking. The affective section deals with emotions while the cognitive section deals with thinking and reasoning. The Buddha called this emotional section *citta*, and the rational section *mano*. The emotional section (*citta*) is blind to reality, and the rational section or intellect (*mano*) is aware of reality. While the intellect tries to adjust to reality, the blind emotions come in conflict with reality.

The reality that the intellect is aware of is: that every event or circumstance is dependent on the necessary conditions. Even if one of the necessary conditions is absent, the event cannot occur. What is dependent on conditions is unstable (*anicca*). What is unstable is insecure, unpleasant and undesirable (*dukkha*). What is unpleasant and undesirable is not as I want. What is not as I want is not under my power. What is not under my power is not mine. What is not mine cannot be me or my “Self” (*anattā*). This is the nature of reality: it is unstable, unpleasant, and impersonal. The wise intellect attempts to adjust to this reality, but the unwise blind emotions refuse to do so. This disagreement results in the conflict mentioned above.

Our emotions are not permanent entities, however. They come and go, dependent on conditions. An emotional disturbance, which is physical, always accompanies a picture in the mind. One kind of emotion can accompany different mental pictures. These emotions come in two basic forms: as a desire for pleasure and as a hatred of pain. This means, what these emotions ultimately seek is permanent pleasure, which is unrealistic and impossible. Pleasure does not remain with us always, and even if it remains, it does not continue to please us forever, we soon become bored with it. Pain though unpleasant is impermanent, and pain cannot be avoided altogether.

Emotions are also possessive and self-centered. We cannot really possess anything in the world, because all relationships are impermanent. Our self-centeredness is futile because we can never really preserve a permanent self or identity, because we change constantly, both physically and mentally and we cannot avoid death. This pursuit of eternal pleasure and eternal life is based on blind emotions and not on clear thinking. It is important to understand that our emotions come in conflict with reality because they are blind, and it is unwise to be carried away by them. It is wiser to be dominated by reason than by emotion. Emotions can never make us happy. They can only make us uncomfortable and unhappy. Happiness comes only through freedom from emotions. It is only when one realizes this fact that one can begin to cultivate true tranquility that leads to happiness.

Let us consider a person who is attracted to money or wealth; he may think that becoming wealthy is the greatest thing in the world, and then begin to earn wealth. When he makes a loss he becomes terribly unhappy. Another might think that social position is greater than wealth, and he might sacrifice wealth to gain social position. When he loses his position he comes to great discomfort as a result. Still, another person might believe that popularity is better than riches or even social position. The latter might sacrifice wealth and high social position to become popular and to secure a good name. Such a person might be blamed and lose the good name some way or other, and as a result suffer much pain of mind. Another person might think, “wealth is of little value,” “social recognition is of little value,” “popularity is of little value,” “what I need is sensual pleasure.” And then, keep on going after sensual pleasure, thinking that it is the greatest thing! Such a person too will be thoroughly disappointed when he/she ceases to get the pleasures that he/ she craves for.

When the mind is free of emotional excitements the body is free from tension, and the mind is calm. Therefore the main task in stilling the mind is to free the mind of emotions. In order to achieve this, we practice two main methods: i) Prevention of emotions entering the mind and ii) Elimination of emotions once they have entered the mind. If these two tasks are accomplished properly, the mind becomes calm and the body is relaxed. To still the mind is to free the mind of emotional disturbances. It is emotions that produce tension in the body and also disturb the thinking.

Emotion is a reaction to stimulation of the senses. It is a chain reaction. Take for example the eye. First we see something, then we interpret or give meaning to what we see. It is according to the way we interpret it that we are emotionally aroused. Therefore in order to stop this emotional reaction we must stop holding on to what we see and also stop interpreting what we see.

If a young man who is meditating sees a girl, he should not hold on to that image he saw, and he should not interpret what he saw as, for example, this is a sexy girl. It is this interpretation that arouses the sexual desire. In the same way, if someone says something and we interpret that as an insult, then anger is aroused. If we do not hold on to what we heard and do not interpret it, this is the way we prevent emotional thoughts entering the mind.

The next step is to get rid of an emotional thought that has already arisen in the mind. If the senses are guarded properly, the only other way the mind can get polluted is when memories come into the mind. When a memory comes to the mind, it comes as a mental image. If we cling to the image and begin to think about it, in sentences, then the emotion is aroused. Thoughts remain in the mind only in the form of visual images and verbal sentences. When such thoughts are present in the mind, emotions are aroused.

[What is Emotion?](#)

What is an emotion?

An emotion is not just a mental thought. It is a complete change in the body. It is according to the way one interprets ones circumstances that the emotion is aroused.

Take for instance, the arousal of anger. When anger emotion is aroused, a message from the brain goes through the sympathetic pathway to the adrenal gland, adrenalin (hormone) is secreted into the blood, and the blood carries it to the whole body. Organs in the body begin to react in unusual ways depending on the hormone, preparing the body for action. In the case of anger emotion, the heart beats faster, breathing becomes heavier, muscles become tense, pupils dilate, hair stand on end, blood rushes to the capillaries in the face, muscles in the face contract to distort facial expression, intestinal movements (digestion, etc) cease. This special way the body reacts is commonly termed “**the fight or flight response**,” which is controlled by the **Amygdala** in the brain.

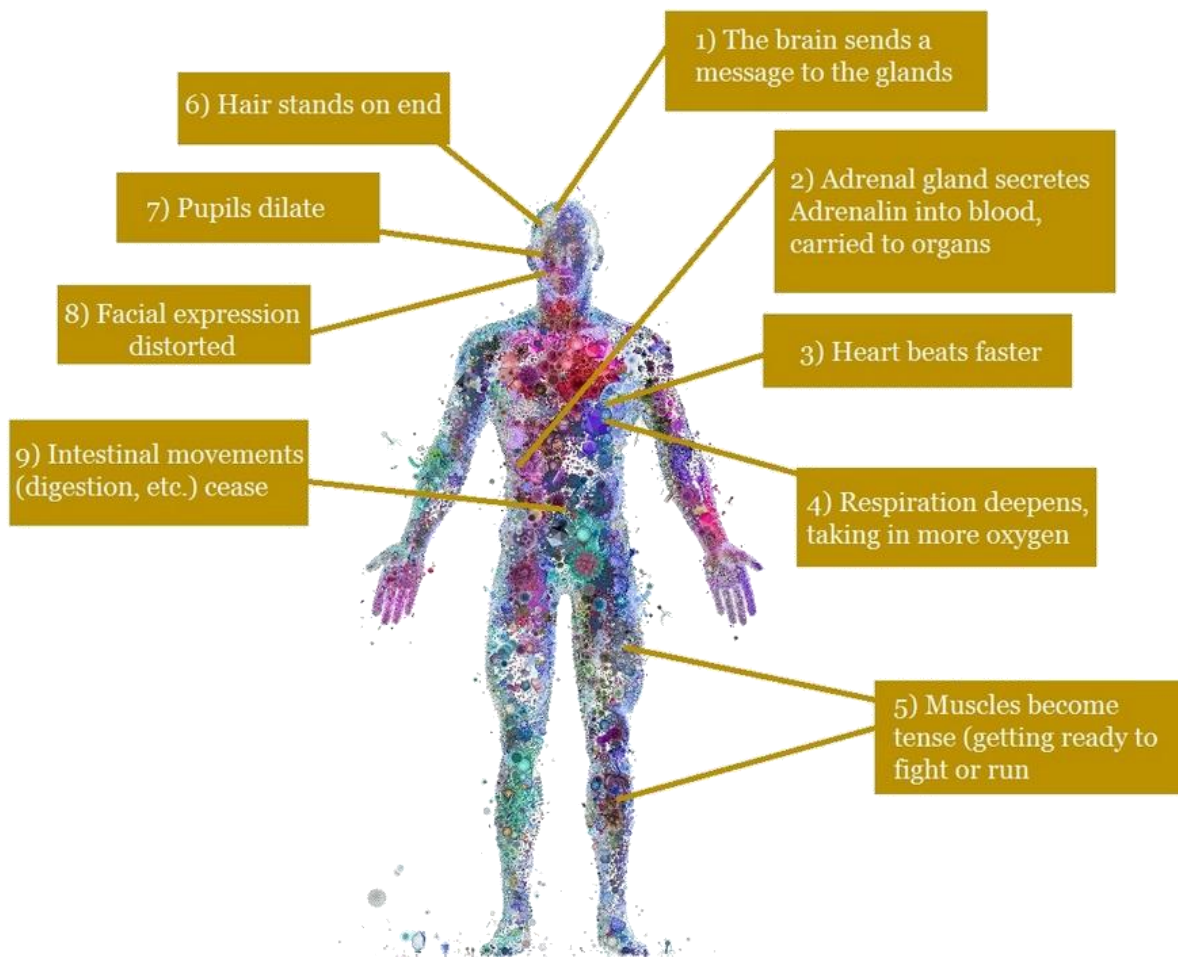
The action depends on the emotion aroused, which may be an action to obtain what is desired, to get rid of what is hated, or to run away from what is feared. Whatever be the action, the behavior of the body during emotional arousal is not normal or healthy. It is an emergency reaction, which is not very healthy, but could be sometimes helpful in an emergency. If this state of arousal continues too long, however, it can be extremely detrimental to the body.

Emotions have been useful for animals for finding food or shelter, defending against threats, reproduction, as well as safety and security. Human beings have a better tool for that purpose, which is intelligence. Yet human beings are dominated by emotions most of the time. As a result we are not free from crime, violence, arrogance, war, insanity, and all the other evils that threaten mankind. All these evils occur in spite of the modern advancements in science and technology, which is rooted in the intellect. This means the intellect of modern man has become the slave of emotions rather than the other way around.

This is why this meditation practice of the Buddha is to make the intellect dominate the mind rather than the emotions. It is the intellect that should guide one's life rather than the emotions. Emotions should be subordinate to intellect. This is what some psychologists like Daniel Goldman have begun to call "emotional intelligence;" which does not mean that emotions have intelligence or can think at all. Emotions are blind; only the intellect can think. Emotional intelligence merely means that emotions are being guided by the intellect, putting emotions under its control.

The Fight or Flight Reaction

The Fight or Flight Reaction

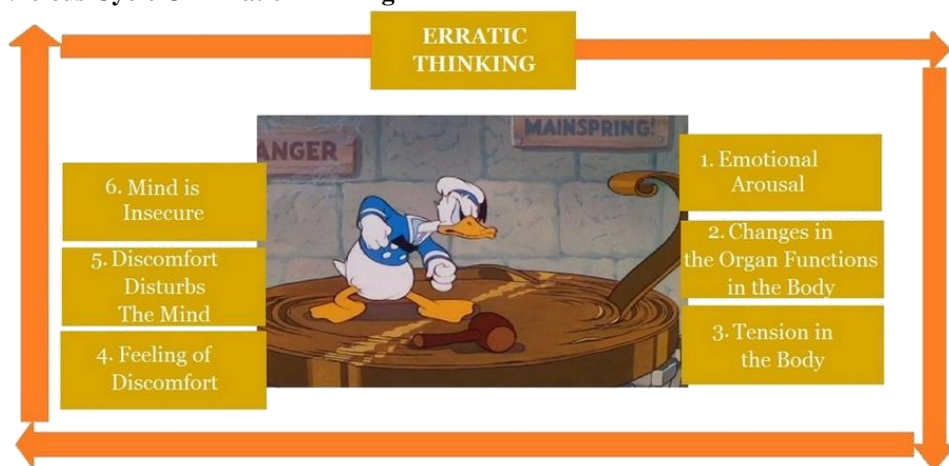


Vicious Cycle of Erratic Thinking

Vicious Cycle Of Erratic Thinking

Negative thoughts in our mind always produce emotional excitement and physical tension. This makes us unhappy mentally and uncomfortable physically. This starts a vicious cycle we call the "**Vicious Cycle of Erratic Thinking**". The mind affects the body and the body affects the mind. Negative thoughts cause emotional arousal, which brings about bodily reactions and tension in the body caused by the hormones secreted during emotional arousal. This tension causes discomfort, which disturbs the mind, which tends to project negative images onto the mental screen which in turn produce more negative thoughts. This in turn causes further emotional arousal, and we become victims of a Vicious Cycle.

Vicious Cycle Of Erratic Thinking

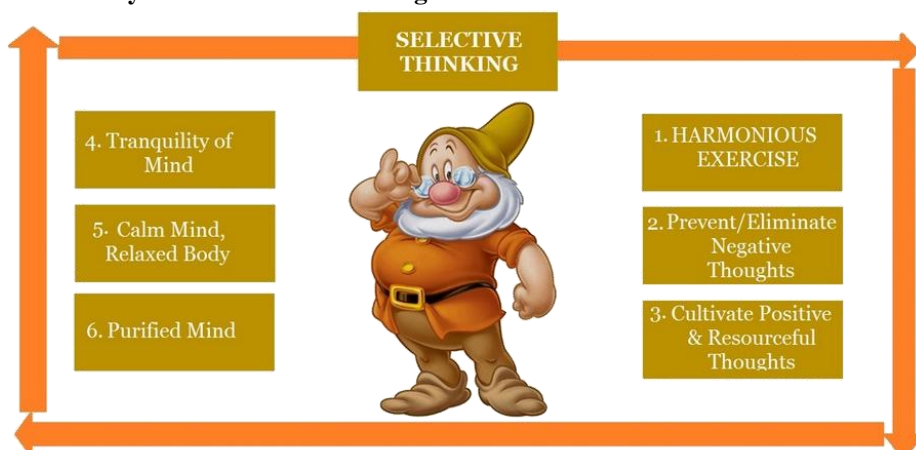


[Virtuous Cycle of Selective Thinking](#)

Virtuous Cycle Of Selective Thinking

This Vicious Cycle can be broken at two points: at the mind and at the body. We break the Vicious Cycle at the mind by calming the mind and applying **Selective Thinking** to refocus our thoughts positively and in a resourceful manner. We break the Vicious Cycle at the body by learning to relax the body. **Harmonious Exercise** calms the mind and relaxes the body, which is what we will learn to apply in this Retreat. With **Selective Thinking** we break the Vicious Cycle and with **Harmonious Exercise**, we transform into what we call the “**Virtuous Cycle of Selective Thinking**.”

Virtuous Cycle Of Selective Thinking



[Ganaka Moggallana Sutta](#)

GANAKA MOGGALLANA SUTTA

Thus have I heard:

1. Once the Blessed One was sojourning at Savatthi in the eastern park, of the mansion of Migara’s mother. Then the Brahmin Ganaka Moggallana visited the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with Him. Having done so, he sat on a side before him and asked the Blessed One:
2. “Master Gotama, in this mansion of Migara’s Mother there can be seen a gradual path, a gradual stepping, and a gradual progress, down to the last step of the staircase. Among these Brahmins too there can be seen a gradual path, gradual practice, and gradual progress, in our studies. Among archers too there can be seen a similar gradual training. Also among accountants like us, who earn our living by accountancy, there is to be seen a gradual training in computation. When we get an apprentice, we first teach him how to count. Is it also possible, master Gotama, to describe a gradual path of training in this Dhamma and Discipline?”
3. “It is possible, Brahmin, to describe a gradual training, a gradual practice, and a gradual progress in this Dhamma and Discipline. ... When the Tathagata obtains a person to be tamed he first disciplines him thus: **(1) ‘Come, bhikkhu, be virtuous**, resort, restrained with the restraint of the *Patimokkha*. Be perfect in conduct, seeing fear in the slightest fault; meticulously undertake the training.
4. “When, Brahmin, the bhikkhu is virtuous ... seeing fear in the slightest fault, meticulously undertakes the training, **then** the Tathagata disciplines him further: ‘Come bhikkhu, **(2) guard your senses**. On seeing an object with the eye, do not reflect on its features or anything associated with it. If you leave your senses unguarded, evil unwholesome states of covetousness and grief might invade you. So practice restraint, guard the eye faculty. Undertake the restraint of the eye faculty. On hearing a sound with the ear ... On smelling an odor with the nose ... On tasting a flavor with the tongue ... On touching a tangible with the body ... On forming a concept in the mind, do not grasp its contents or any associations. Since,

if you were to leave the mind faculty unguarded, evil unwholesome states might invade you. Follow the way of restraint. Guard the mind faculty. Undertake the restraint of the mind faculty.’

5. “When, Brahmin, the bhikkhu guards the doors of his sense faculties, **then** the Tathagata disciplines him further: ‘Come, bhikkhu, **(3) be moderate in eating**. Reflecting wisely, you should take food neither for amusement, nor for intoxication, nor for the sake of physical beauty and attractiveness, but only for the endurance and continuance of this body, for ending discomfort, and for assisting the holy life, considering: ‘Thus I shall terminate old feelings without arising new feelings, and I shall be healthy and blameless, and shall live in comfort.’”

6. “When, Brahmin, the bhikkhu is moderate in eating, then the Tathagata disciplines him further: ‘Come bhikkhu, **(4) be devoted to wakefulness**. During the day, while walking back and forth and sitting, purify your mind of obstructive states. In the first watch of the night, while walking back and forth and sitting, purify your mind of obstructive states. In the middle watch of the night you should lie down on the right side in the lion’s pose with one foot overlapping the other, mindful and fully aware, after noting in your mind the time for rising. After rising, in the third watch of the night, while walking back and forth and sitting, purify your mind of obstructive states.’

7. “When, Brahmin, the bhikkhu is devoted to wakefulness, **then** the Tathagata disciplines him further: ‘Come bhikkhu, **(5) be possessed of introverted attention (sati) and observant (sampajañña)**. Be introspective when going forward and returning; Be introspective when looking ahead and looking away; Be introspective when flexing and extending your limbs; Be introspective when wearing your robes and carrying your outer robe and bowl; Be introspective when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting; Be introspective when defecating and urinating; Be introspective when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent.

8. “When, Brahmin, the bhikkhu possesses, introverted attention (sati) and introspection (sampajañña), then the Tathagata disciplines him further: ‘Come bhikkhu, **(6) resort to a secluded resting place**: the forest, the root of a tree, a mountain, a ravine, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle thicket, an open space, a heap of straw.’”

9. “He resorts to a secluded resting place: a forest, or empty hut, or root of a tree, a heap of straw. On returning from his alms-round, after his meal he sits down, folding his legs crosswise, setting his body erect, withdrawing his attention from the surroundings and establishing attention within. **Abandoning lust** for the world, he abides with a mind free from lust; he purifies his mind from lust. **Abandoning ill will** and hatred, he abides with a mind free from ill will, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings; he purifies his mind from ill will and hatred. **Abandoning laziness and sleepiness**, he abides free from sloth and torpor, percipient of light, with introverted attention and introspective, he purifies his mind from sloth and torpor. **Abandoning anxiety and worry**, he abides undisturbed with a mind inwardly peaceful; he purifies his mind from worry and anxiety. **Abandoning mental confusion**, he abides free from confusion, free from perplexity about wholesome states; he purifies his mind from confusion.

10. “Having thus abandoned these five hindrances, emotions that distort thinking, withdrawn from sensual pleasures, withdrawn from unwholesome thoughts, accompanied by inquiry and inference, with rapture and comfort born of relinquishment he enters upon and abides in **the first ecstasy (jhana)**.

With the stilling of inquiry and inference, being internally purified with tranquil temper, he enters upon and abides in **the second ecstasy (jhana)**, which is free from inquiry and inference, but with rapture and comfort born of tranquility (*samadhi*).

Then having relinquished rapture, he abides introspective, with attention introverted and observant, experiencing comfort in the body, thus entering **the third ecstasy (jhana)**, about which the Sublime-Ones proclaim: ‘the introspective introvert lives in comfort.’

Having abandoned both comfort and discomfort, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, free from pleasure and pain, being purified by introspection and introverted attention, he enters **the fourth ecstasy (jhana)**.

11. “This is my instruction, Brahmin, to those bhikkhus who are in the higher training, whose minds have not yet attained the goal, who abide aspiring to the supreme security from bondage. But these things conduce both to a pleasant abiding here and now, and to introverted attention and observation for those bhikkhus who want to be Arahants with taints destroyed, who have lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached their special goal, destroyed the fetters of being, and are completely liberated through Super knowledge.”

12. When this was said, the Brahmin Ganaka Moggallana asked the Blessed One: “When Master Gotama’s disciples are thus advised and instructed by him, do they all attain Nibbana, the ultimate goal, or do some not attain it?”

13. “Master Gotama, since Nibbana exist and the path leading to Nibbana exist and Master Gotama is present as the guide, what is the cause and reason why, when Master Gotama’s disciples are thus advised and instructed by him, some of them attain Nibbana, the ultimate goal, and some do not attain it?”

14. “As to that, Brahmin, I will ask you a question in return. Answer it as you choose. What do you think, Brahmin? Are you familiar with the road leading to Rajagaha?”

“Yes, Master Gotama, I am familiar with the road leading to Rajagaha.”

“What do you think, Brahmin? Suppose a man who wanted to go to Rajagaha approached you and said: ‘Dear sir, I want to go to Rajagaha. Show me the road to Rajagaha.’ Then you told him: ‘Good man, this is the road that goes to Rajagaha. Follow it for awhile and you will see a certain village, go a little further and you will see a certain town, go a little further and you will see Rajagaha with its lovely parks, groves, meadows, and ponds.’ Then, having been thus advised and instructed by you, he would take a wrong road and would go to the west. Then suppose a second man came, who wanted to go to Rajagaha, and he approached you and said: ‘Dear sir, I want to go to Rajagaha. Show me the road to Rajagaha.’ Then you told him the way similarly. Then, having been thus advised and instructed by you, he would arrive safely in Rajagaha. Now, Brahmin, since Rajagaha exists and the path leading to Rajagaha exists and you are present as the guide, what is the cause and reason why, when those men have been advised and instructed by you, one man takes a wrong road and goes to the west, and one arrives safely in Rajagaha?”

“What can I do about that, Master Gotama? I am only one who shows the way.”

“So too, Brahmin, Nibbana exists, and the path leading to Nibbana exists, and I am present as the guide, yet, when my disciples have been thus advised and instructed by me, some of them attain Nibbana, the ultimate goal, and some do not attain it. What can I do about that, Brahmin? The *Tathagata* is only one who shows the way.”

15. “When this was said, the Brahmin Ganaka Moggallana said to the Blessed One. “There are persons who are faithless, and have gone forth from the home life into homelessness not out of faith, but seeking a livelihood, who are fraudulent, deceitful, treacherous, haughty, hollow, personally vain, rough-tongued, loose-spoken, unguarded in their sense faculties, immoderate in eating, not devoted to wakefulness, unconcerned with hermit life, not greatly respectful of training, luxurious, careless, leaders in backsliding, neglectful of seclusion, lazy, wanting in energy, unmindful, not fully aware, not calm, with straying minds, devoid of wisdom, drivellers. Master Gotama does not dwell together with these.

“But there are clansmen who have gone forth out of faith from the home life into homelessness, who are not fraudulent, deceitful, treacherous, haughty, hollow, personally vain, rough-tongued, and loose-spoken; who are guarded in their sense faculties, moderate in eating, devoted to wakefulness, concerned with hermit life, greatly respectful of training, not luxurious or careless, who are keen to avoid backsliding, leaders in seclusion, energetic, resolute, established in introspection and reflection, calm, with unified minds, possessing wisdom, not drivellers, Master Gotama dwells together with these.

16. “Just as black orrisroot is reckoned as the best of root perfumes, and red sandalwood is reckoned as the best of wood perfumes, and jasmine is reckoned as the best of flower perfumes, so too, Master Gotama’s advice is supreme among the teachings of the world.

17. “Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent, Master Gotama! Master Gotama has made the Dhamma clear in many ways, as though we were turning upright what had been overturned, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see. I go to Master Gotama for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha. Let Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has taken refuge for life.”

[Dantabhūmi Sutta](#)

DANTABHŪMI SUTTA **The Grade of the Tamed**

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD.

Once the Blessed One was sojourning at Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels’ Sanctuary.

2. On that occasion the novice Aciravata was living in a forest hut. Then Prince Jayasena, while wandering and walking for exercise, went to the novice Aciravata and exchanged greetings with him.¹¹⁷⁴ When his courteous and amiable talk was finished, he sat down at one side and said to the novice Aciravata: “Master Aggivessana, I have heard that a bhikkhu who abides here diligent, ardent, and resolute can achieve unification of mind.”

“That is so, prince, that is so. A bhikkhu who abides here diligent, ardent, and resolute can achieve unification of mind.”

3. “It will be good if Master Aggivessana would teach me the Dhamma as he has heard it and mastered it.”

“I cannot teach you the Dhamma, prince, as I have heard it and mastered it. For if I were to teach you the Dhamma as I have heard it and mastered it, you would not understand the meaning of my words, and that would be wearying and troublesome for me.” [129]

4. “Let Master Aggivessana teach me the Dhamma as you have heard it and mastered it. Perhaps I can understand the meaning of your words.”

“If so, I shall teach you the Dhamma, prince, as I have heard it and mastered it. If you can understand the meaning of my words, that will be so good. But if you cannot understand the meaning, then leave it at that, and do not question me about it further.”

“Let Master Aggivessana teach me the Dhamma, as you have heard it and mastered it. If I can understand the meaning of your words, that will be so good. If I cannot understanding the meaning, then I will leave it at that, and I will not question you about it any further.”

5. Then the novice Aciravata taught Prince Jayasena the Dhamma as he had heard it and mastered it. After he had spoken, Prince Jayasena remarked: “It is impossible, Master Aggivessana, it cannot happen that a bhikkhu who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute can achieve unification of mind.” Then, having declared to the novice Aciravata that this was impossible and could not happen, Prince Jayasena rose from his seat and departed.

6. Soon after Prince Jayasena had left, the novice Aciravata went to the Blessed One. After paying homage to the Blessed One, he sat down at one side and reported to the Blessed One his entire conversation with Prince Jayasena. When he had finished, the Blessed One said to him:

7. “Aggivessana, how is it possible that Prince Jayasena, living in the midst of sensual pleasures, enjoying sensual pleasures, being devoured by thoughts of sensual pleasures, being consumed by the fever of sensual pleasures, bent on the search for sensual pleasures, [130] could know, see, or realise that which must be known through renunciation, seen through renunciation, attained through renunciation, realised through renunciation? That is impossible.

8. “Suppose, Aggivessana, there were two tamable elephants, horses or oxen that were well tamed and well disciplined, and two tamable elephants, horses, and oxen that were untamed and undisciplined. What do you think, Aggivessana? Would the two tamable elephants, horses, and oxen that were well tamed and well disciplined, being tamed, acquire the behaviour of the tamed, would they arrive at the grade of that tamed?” – “Yes, venerable sir.” – “But would the two tamable elephants, horses, and oxen that were untamed and undisciplined, being untamed, acquire the behaviour of the tamed, would they arrive at the grade of that tamed, like the two tamable elephants, horses, and oxen that were well tamed and well disciplined?” – “No, venerable sir.” – “So too, Aggivessana, it is impossible that Prince Jayasena, living in the midst of sensual pleasures, ... could know, see, or realise that which must be known through renunciation, seen through renunciation, attained through renunciation, realised through renunciation.”

9. “Suppose, Aggivessana, there were a high mountain not far from the village or town, and two friends would leave the village or town and approach the mountain hand in hand. Having reached it, one friend would remain below at the foot of the mountain while the other would climb to the top. Then the friend who remained below at the foot of the mountain would say to the friend who stood at the top: ‘Well friend, what do you see, standing on the top of the mountain?’ And the other replied: ‘Standing on the top of the mountain, friend, I see lovely parks, lovely groves, lovely meadows, and lovely ponds.’ Then the friend who remained below would say: ‘It is impossible, [131] friend, it cannot happen that while standing on top of the mountain you should see lovely parks, lovely groves, lovely meadows, and lovely ponds.’ Then the friend who climbed the top would come down to the foot of the mountain, take his friend by the arm, and make him climb to the top of the mountain. After giving him a few moments to catch his breath, he would ask: ‘Well, friend, now standing on top of the mountain, what do you see?’ And his friend would reply: ‘Standing on top of the mountain, friend, I see lovely parks, lovely groves, lovely meadows, and lovely ponds.’ Then the other would say: ‘Friend, just a little earlier we heard you say: “It is impossible, friend, it cannot happen that while standing on top of the mountain you should see lovely parks... lovely ponds.” But just now we heard you say: “Standing on the top of the mountain, friend, I see lovely parks... lovely ponds.”’ Then the other friend would reply: ‘Because I was obstructed by these high mountain, friend, I did not see what was there to be seen.’”

10. “So too, Aggivessana, Prince Jayasena is obstructed, hindered, blocked, and enveloped by a still greater mass than this mass of ignorance. Thus, it is impossible that Prince Jayasena, living in the midst of sensual pleasures, ... could know, see, or realise that which must be known through renunciation, seen through renunciation, attained through renunciation, realised through renunciation.”

11. “Aggivessana, if these two similes had occurred to you [with reference] to Prince Jayasena, he would have spontaneously acquired confidence in you, and being confident, would have shown his confidence to you.”

“Venerable sir, how could these two similes have occurred to me, as they occurred to the Blessed One. They are spontaneous to the Blessed One. I have never heard them before?”

[132] 12. “Suppose Aggivessana, a head-anointed noble King addresses his elephant woodsman thus: ‘Good elephant woodsman, mount the king’s elephant, enter the elephant wood, and when you see a forest elephant, bind him by the neck to the king’s elephant.’ Having replied ‘Yes, Sire,’ the elephant woodsman mounts the king’s elephant, enters the elephant wood, and when he sees a forest elephant, binds him by the neck to the king’s elephant. The king’s elephant leads him out to the open. It is in this way that a forest elephant comes out into the open; for the forest elephant clings to the elephant wood.”

“Then the elephant woodsman informs the head-anointed noble king: ‘Sire, the forest elephant has come out into the open.’ The king addresses his elephant tamer thus: ‘Come, good elephant tamer, tame the forest elephant. Subdue his forest habits, subdue his forest memories and intentions, subdue his distress, fatigue, and fever over leaving the forest. Get him to take delight in the town, inculcate in him habits congenial to human beings.’ Having replied ‘Yes, Sire,’ the elephant tamer plants the large post in the earth and binds the forest elephant to it by the neck in order to subdue his forest habits... and to inculcate in him habits congenial to human beings.”

“Then the elephant tamer addresses the elephant with words that are gentle, pleasing to the ear, and lovable, as go to the heart, are courteous, desired by many, and agreeable to many. When the forest elephant [133] is addressed by such words, he listens, gives ear, and exerts his mind to understand. The elephant tamer next rewards him with grass-fodder and water. When the forest elephant accepts the grass-fodder and water from him, the elephant tamer knows: ‘Now the king’s elephant will live!’”

“Then the elephant tamer trains him further thus: ‘Take up, put down!’ When the king’s elephant obeys his tamers orders to take up and put down and carries out his instructions, the elephant tamer trains him further thus: ‘Go forward, go back!’ When the king’s elephant obeys his tamer’s orders to go forward and go back and carries out his instructions, the elephant tamer trains him further thus: ‘Get up, sit down!’ when the king’s elephant obeys his tamers orders to get up and sit down and carries out his instructions, the elephant tamer trains him further in the task called imperturbability. He ties a giant plank to his trunk; a man with a lance in his hand sits on his neck; men with lances in their hands surround him on all sides; and the elephant tamer himself stands in front of him holding a long lance pole. When the elephant is being trained in the task of imperturbability, he does not move his forelegs or his hindlegs; he does not move his forequarters or his hindquarters; he does not move his head, ears, tusks, tail or trunk. The king’s elephant is able to endure blows from spears, blows from swords, blows from arrows, blows from other beings, and the thundering sounds of drums, kettledrums, trumpets, and tomtoms. Being rid of all faults and defects, purged of flaws, he is worthy of the king, in the king’s service, considered one of the properties of a king. [134]*****

13-14. “So too, Aggivessana, a Tathāgata appears in the world, accomplished, fully enlightened...(as sutta 51, SS12-13)..he shaves of his hair and beard, puts on the yellow robe, and goes forth from the home life into homelessness. It is in this way that a noble disciple comes out to the open; for gods and humans cling to the five cords of sensual pleasure.”

26-29. “When his mind is thus purified...(as Sutta 51, ss24- 27).... He understands: ‘Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.’

30. “That bhikkhu is able to endure cold and heat, hunger and thirst, and contact with gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, the sun, and creeping things; he is able to endure ill-spoken, unwelcome words and arisen bodily [137] feelings that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, disagreeable, distressing, and menacing to life. Being rid of all lust, hate, and delusion, purged of flaws, he is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutations, an unsurpassed field of merit for the world.

31. “if Aggivessana, the king’s elephant dies in old age untamed and undisciplined, then he is considered an old elephant that has died an untamed death. If the king’s elephant dies when middle-aged untamed and undisciplined, then he is considered a middle-aged elephant that has died an untamed death. If the king’s elephant dies when young untamed and undisciplined, then he is considered a young elephant that has died an untamed death. So too, Aggivessana, if an elder bhikkhu dies with his taints undestroyed, then he is considered an elder bhikkhu who has dies an untamed death. If a bhikkhu of middle status dies with his taints undestroyed, then he is considered of middle status who has dies an untamed death. If a newly ordained bhikkhu dies with his taints undestroyed, then he is considered a newly ordained bhikkhu who had an untamed death.”

32. “if Aggivessana, the king’s elephant dies in old age well tamed and well disciplined, then he is considered an old elephant that had a tamed death. If the king’s elephant dies when middle-aged well tamed and well disciplined, then he is considered a middle-aged elephant that had a tamed death. If the king’s elephant dies when young well tamed and well disciplined, then he is considered a young elephant that had a tamed death. So too, Aggivessana, if an elder bhikkhu dies with his taints destroyed, then he is considered an elder bhikkhu who had a tamed death. If a bhikkhu of middle status dies with his taints destroyed, then he is considered of middle status who had a tamed death. If a newly ordained bhikkhu dies with his taints destroyed, then he is considered a newly ordained bhikkhu who had a tamed death.”

That is what the Blessed One said. The novice Aciravata was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

The **purpose** of Buddhist meditation is not mere tranquility or insight but **awakening from the dream of existence**. This dream of **existence of a “self” and a “world” is filled with unhappiness** because of dissatisfaction, frustration, disappointment, boredom, failure, loss, inadequacy and the millions of worries, anxieties, depressions that commonly fill our lives. Aging, sickness and Death is the most unavoidable unfavorable part of this dream. One **who is awake from this dream is not only happy always, but also immortal here and now** - not after death. This was why the **Buddha opened his mission to save**, those with a little dust in their eyes, **from suffering and death**, in the well-known words:

“**Open is the door to immortality**

May those who have ears, listen, ...

And be freed by this sound”)))

Apârutâ tesan amatassa dvârâ

Ye sotavanto pamuccantu saddan

ARIYAMAGGA BHAVANA III
THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY
 ADVANCED RETREAT
 STEPS TO AWAKENING

Instructor
 Venerable Dr. Madawela Punnaji Maha Thera

This form of meditation is based on the original teachings of the Buddha as they are found in the Pali Sutta Pitaka. It is conducted at three retreat levels:

(1) Beginner	Selective Thinking (<i>anussati</i>)
(2) Intermediate	Cultivation of Tranquility (<i>sammappadhāna</i>)
(3) Advanced	Awakening from the dream of existence (<i>satta bojjhanga</i>)

[Third and Final Level](#)

Third and Final Level

This booklet is the third and final in the series of booklets on the three levels of meditation that provide step-by-step guidance toward attainment of the imperturbable serenity of mind – *Nibbāna* – as taught by the Buddha and recorded in the Pali language in the Sutta Pitaka of the Tripitaka.

The reader is invited to read all three booklets before beginning on the meditative path. This will serve as a map to enable one to understand the terrain to be traversed before starting the journey.

The profound teachings of the Buddha are not easy to decipher and put into practice. Today, the *Dhamma* is mostly practiced at the basic *saddhā* and *sīla* levels. The more advanced teachings encompassing *samādhi* and *paññā* are not well understood or practiced. The primary reason for this is the difficulty in deciphering the Buddha's extraordinarily intelligent description of the realities of life, the problem of existence, and the salvation through awakening from the dream of existence.

The author has dedicated over 60 years to the task of understanding and practicing the advanced teachings of the Buddha based on the original teachings as recorded in the scriptures of the Theravada tradition. To do so, the author received training in science, medicine, philosophy, psychology, astronomy and even comparative religion. These fields of knowledge generated by very intelligent though spiritually un-awakened human beings, whose perspectives may be quite different from that of the Buddha, can still be an invaluable aid to understand the deep insightful teachings of the Buddha. The theoretical studies of the author has been put into practice and verified through his own experience. It is these understandings and experiences that the reader is presented within these booklets. May this knowledge offered by the author with great compassion to the general public translate into proper channels leading to the great transformations experienced by the Awakened seekers of the bygone era.

May the merits so acquired by Venerable Dr. Madawela Punnaji Maha Thera help everyone of you strengthen your resolve to attain *Nibbāna*.

May all beings be well and happy!

[An Apology](#)

An apology

It is with a humble apology that we begin to explain at the outset why we use uncommon terminology in our writings to translate the orthodox Pali terms. The reason is that we have made a careful effort to understand and express the **meaning** conveyed in a Pali **sentence**, rather than to merely translate the **words in the sentence**. Our aim has been to lay before the reader in a precise manner the message conveyed by the Buddha in his well-chosen words.

We are greatly indebted, however, to the well-known English translators such as: Rhys Davids, F. L. Woodward, I. B. Horner, and many others for getting the English reading public interested in the teachings of the Awakened One, the Buddha. Yet these translations made by the early translators contained many errors. This does not mean that we are attempting to pick holes in the tremendous work done by these great men and women. We are very thankful to these early translators, and we cannot blame them for their errors because they had to learn Pali from Sinhalese monks who had no knowledge of English. Obviously the English translators had to make use of Sinhalese translators who knew English, though their knowledge of Pali could still be questionable. This explains the difficulty these English translators would have had in learning the Pali language and even translating the words of the Buddha. This is why we must appreciate the work

done by these translators despite their short comings. They have produced much important literature that we still keep using.

While recognizing these facts with gratitude, we should also be aware of the possibility for error in these English translations. Present day readers in English who use these translations seriously want to know the genuine teachings of the Buddha as clearly as possible. Therefore there is a great need to rectify the mistakes for their benefit.

We must remember that the success of a translation depends on the translator's ability to comprehend the meaning expressed in a sentence, more than on his understanding of the words in it. In other words, we believe that a translation should be more than a translation of words. It should translate the meaning expressed by the words in a sentence. The way an idea expressed in one language differs from the way it is expressed in another language. Very often the idea is lost if one translates word for word. If a translator is unable to comprehend the meaning conveyed by a sentence, the translation is unsuccessful and possibly misleading. The way an idea expressed in a European language differs very much from the way the same idea is expressed in an Indian language. In other words, it is important to know the idiom of the language. This is why it is very difficult for a Westerner to extract the meaning of a Pali statement even if they had studied the grammar and the vocabulary of the language.

Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese are very closely related languages. Often the same word is used to express an idea in these languages, though in a slightly different form. The grammar as well as idiom in these three languages is very similar. This is why a translation made by a person whose mother tongue is the Sinhalese language, and whose command of the English language is quite adequate, could be more successful than that of a Westerner who is proficient in the Pali language, but insufficiently familiar with its idiom.

There is, moreover, another problem commonly encountered by translators of the teachings of the Buddha. This problem is based on the fact that these teachings are not mere stories, although some stories are found in the teachings. The teachings of the Buddha are profoundly logical, scientific, philosophical, psychological, and even contain concepts used in modern scientific thinking. Therefore a person who is unfamiliar with at least the basics of these modern subjects, cannot comprehend these ideas of the Buddha, even though he/ she may be familiar with the Pali language or even linguistics. Without fully comprehending the meaning of a Pali statement, it would not be easy to translate it effectively. We do not claim to be experts in these high-flown subjects, but our translator has spent almost his entire life studying some of these high level subjects, with the hope of comprehending the profound teachings of the Buddha. In addition, the translator has also tested these ideas, by putting them into practice, in order to verify the validity of the genuine teachings. An intelligent reader will be able to recognize this fact as he/she reads through the pages of this booklet. So it is advisable that the reader takes careful note of these facts and not jump into hasty conclusions and be over critical.

It would also be profitable to keep an open mind while reading, and carefully note the new meanings conveyed by the new translations, which may be quite different from the meaning conveyed by the common translations the reader is familiar with. The reader would also have an opportunity to judge for oneself whether or not the new translations give a meaning that is more enlightening than the former, and so bear witness to the validity of the translation of the words of an Enlightened One.

For the benefit of those who are puzzled by our use of new terminology, we plan to provide in the near future, a glossary containing the new words we use. We will also explain why we use the new terms instead of the commonly used ones.

[Message in Book One](#)

Message in book one

Our **first book** was about the **beginner's level** of meditation, which was a discussion of the **first five steps** of the Supernormal Eightfold Way. If one practiced these first five steps proficiently and systematically one could enter the level called **Stream Entrant** (*Sotāpanna*). Yet this title has to be confirmed by the "Great Community" (*Mahā Sangha*).

[Message in Book Two](#)

Message in book two

In the **second book** on meditation, which is the **intermediate level of practice**, we discussed the **Harmonious Exercise**, in the Supernormal Eightfold Way. This practice is also called the "Four Harmonious Steps" (*Cattāri Sammāpādhāni*). The Four steps are:

- (1) Prevention (*Saṅvara*)
- (2) Elimination (*Pahāna*)
- (3) Cultivation (*Bhāvanā*)
- (4) Maintenance (*Anurakkhaṇa*).

The aim of this **intermediate level** of meditation is to enter the **four levels of deep tranquillity** of mind called **Ecstasy** (*jhāna*), and therefore it is also called **Tranquility Meditation** (*samatha bhāvanā*).

We use the term **ecstasy** in a special sense here. It means, to "stand out" (**ec** = out, **stasy** = stand). When the first two of these steps are practiced proficiently, **the mind is withdrawn** from the **external surroundings, memories, and imaginations**, (i.e. standing out) and is ready to be **focused within** (introspection = *satipaṭṭhāna*) for **continuous observation** (*sati sampajañña*) of what is going on quite unconsciously within. When this is properly practiced, the **mind**

becomes completely free of hindrances and the five Constituents of Ecstasy (*jhānāṅga*) appear, which are: inference (*vitakka*), inquiry (*vicāra*), serenity (*pīti*), comfort (*sukha*), unification of mind (*ekaggatā*).

If one practices this second level of practice or **intermediate level**, conscientiously, it is possible to attain the level of advancement called the **Once Returner** (*Sakadāgāmi*). This title too, however, has to be confirmed by the “Great Community” (*Mahā Sangha*).

[Message in Book Three](#)

Message in book three

This booklet contains the **third and the most advanced level** of practice, in our series of lessons in progressive meditation instruction.

The **third level of practice**, given in this book, is the final and the most **advanced level** of practice, in our system of meditation. In other words, this **final level** is the practice of the **Harmonious Attention** (*sammā sati*), of the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**, which we refer to as **introspection**, which is **introversion of attention** followed by the **constant observation** (*sampajañña*) of what is going on **within**. When this **introspection** (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is constantly maintained (*anurakkhaṇa*), it results in **beginning the Seven Steps to Awakening**, because **introspection** (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is the first step in the **Seven Steps to Awakening**. In other words, this third level of meditation becomes the practice of the **Seven Steps to Awakening**. This practice therefore is the final stage that awakens the practitioner from the **dream of existence**.

This **Ariyamagga Bhavana Level III**, which is also called **Vidassana Bhāvanā** is for **advanced regular meditators**, and **not for occasional meditators** of short-term duration. It is for those who have been practicing **tranquility meditation** (*samatha bhāvanā*) and have reached a high level of tranquility or ecstasy (*jhāna*). We compare this practice of meditation to the practice of the **final step** in the game of **golf**, which is only for players who have already completed the earlier stages. The reader who is unfamiliar with Ariyamagga Bhavana Levels I and II is encouraged to read them prior to reading the present booklet, in order to avoid confusion.

In practicing the **Seven Steps to Awakening** (*satta bojjhanga*) in this way, the **five hindrances** (*pañca nīvaraṇa*) can be **completely eliminated forever**. When the mind is thus **completely free of hindrances** the emancipated individual **remains with a pure mind throughout his/her life**. This means, an **emancipated individual** or *Arahat* will be constantly **in ecstasy**, because he/she stands **out of the emotional world**, until the death of the body. This explains the meaning of the **statement in the Ratana Sutta**: “What the Buddha extolled as the **supreme uninterrupted purity and tranquility**” (*yam Buddha setthoparivannayisucin, samādhim-ānantarika aññamāhu*). This uninterrupted purity and tranquility (*Anantarika samādhi*) = the imperturbable serenity (*akuppa ceto vimutti*), which is the unshakable **Nirvana** (*Nibbāna*). It is also the return to the original state of clarity (*pabassaraṃ idaṃ cittam*), or **homeostasis**.

This means, if a person practices according to this **final level of practice** conscientiously, it is possible for such a practitioner to become an **emancipator** or **Destroyer of Bonds** (*Arahat*), or at least a **Non-returner** (*Anāgami*). This too, however, has to be **confirmed** by the *Mahā Sangha*. No one can claim to be emancipated without the approval of the *Mahā Sangha*.

“**This fact is noteworthy**” because today in the modern world there are many who are believed to be arahats, and some even **claim** to be arahats though **not confirmed by the Mahā Sangha**.

[Is this vipassanā bhāvanā or insight meditation?](#)

Is this vipassanā bhāvanā or insight meditation?

This proper cultivation of the **Seven Steps to Awakening** (*satta bojjhanga*) is the **real “Insight Meditation”** (*vipassanā bhāvanā*), as taught by the Buddha, in the Sutta Pitaka. We, however, call our third level of meditation **vidassana bhāvanā** instead of *vipassanā*, in order to distinguish it from the common kind of *vipassanā bhāvanā* that is taught all over the world today, which is based on the teachings in the *Visuddhi Magga*, written by the well known author Buddhagosa. Our method is not based on the *Visuddhi Magga* but on the words of the Buddha as found in the Sutta Pitaka. We describe our method of *vidassanā bhāvanā* as “**the development of Super- perception**” (*abhiññā*). The term **apperception**, as we use it, means: **focusing attention on the process of perception**, rather than on the **object perceived**. When this is done a paradigm shift occurs between existential thinking and experiential thinking, which results in **Super-perception** (*abhiññā*). This will be explained in more detail in due course.

In support of our use of the term **vidassanā**, instead of *vipassanā* we quote a passage from the Metta Sutta: “*diṭṭhiṅca anupagamma sīlavā dassanena sampanno*,” which we understand as: “Having withdrawn attention from the **objects perceived**, the disciplined individual focuses attention on the **process of perception**.” This method of meditation will be elaborated as we proceed. It is difficult for a beginner to comprehend this fully at this stage. A peep into the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* in the Majjhima Nikaya could be helpful in comprehension.

[The Supernormal Eightfold Way](#)

The Supernormal Eightfold Way

The Buddha had spoken of two ways of helping a blind man cross the road. One method is to hold his hand and guide the way. In such a case the blind man does not know where we are taking him. He must have blind faith in us. The other method is that of a surgeon who performs an operation on the blind man’s eye to make him see for himself. This way the

blind faith is eliminated. The Buddha declared that his method of teaching meditation is similar to the method of the surgeon. This is why the teaching of the Buddha is not based on blind faith but on clear comprehension. This marvellous method of the Buddha has eight steps. It is called the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**, commonly translated as the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the method we follow. It is called **supernormal** because the aim of the Buddha was not to get people to believe in him blindly and obey him, but his aim was to transform normal people with worries and anxieties to a supernormal level of happiness. This aim of the Buddha is the counterpart of the modern psychotherapist's aim, which is to bring abnormal suffering to a normal level of unhappiness. How The Buddha's **supernormal aim** is realized, however, will be made clear in due course, because that is the main purpose of this booklet.

[Enlightenment First or Last](#)

Enlightenment first or last?

An important question that arises at this point is: whether enlightenment arises after meditation, or whether one should be enlightened before the meditation. This seems to be a question that arose in the mind of *Acariya Buddhagosa* when beginning to write the *Visuddhimagga*. Obviously, he thought that knowledge came after meditation. This was why he saw the path as *sīla-samādhi-paññā*, which he saw as starting with **control of behaviour**, followed by **concentration of mind**, and ending up in gaining **insight**.

He even quoted the words of the Buddha, in support of this position:

The enlightened human, being disciplined

– *Sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño*

Develops the mood and intellect

– *Cittaṇ paññānca bhavaṇaṇ*

This tranquil intelligent mendicant

– *Ātāpi nipako bhikkhu*

He does solve this problem

– *So imaṇ vijaṭaye jataṇ*

[The Three Level Way is Not The Path](#)

The three level way is not the path

Unfortunately, he misunderstood the quotation. He seems to have ignored the statement: “**Enlightened human**, being disciplined” (*sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño*). (*naro sapañño* = the enlightened human). The fact that **enlightenment precedes discipline** is further supported in the culla vedalla sutta, although it is often misinterpreted even there. In other words, the path is the **Supernormal Eightfold Way** and not the three levels (*sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*). This means the control of behaviour (*sīla*) has to be based on an understanding of the reason for control, as indicated by the precedence of the **Harmonious Perspective** (*sammā diṭṭhi*). This is why **The Supernormal Eightfold Way** (*Ariya Aṭṭhangika Magga*) begins with the **Harmonious Perspective** (*sammā diṭṭhi*) followed by the **Harmonious orientation** (*sammā sankappa*) before getting into the discipline of behaviour, which is: **Harmonious speech** (*sammā vācā*), **Harmonious action** (*sammā kammanā*) and **Harmonious life** (*sammā ājīva*). This means, this control of behaviour (*sīla*) is not something to be done on blind faith. If it is done on blind faith, it becomes a heteronomous morality (*sīlabbata parāmāsa*), which is a **morality** subject to **external impositions**. What is needed here is supernormal morality (*ariya sīla*), which is an **autonomous morality** based on personal conviction and a quietist and benevolent orientation (*aparāmaṭṭha samādhi sanvattanikaṇ*).

[Harmonious Perspective](#)

The Harmonious Perspective

The first step, therefore, on this extraordinary path is the **Harmonious Perspective**, commonly translated as **Right View**, or **Right understanding**. In other words, we start by **explaining** to the follower what **the problem** is, the **cause of the problem**, and the **solution to the problem**. In other words, we explain **what** should be done, **why** it should be done, and **how** it should be done. This means **we explain**, so no one can **complain**. In other words, this is not a “monkey see, monkey do” method. We speak to intelligent people who want to understand what they are doing, and why they are doing it.

[Only Way To Emancipation](#)

Only way to emancipation

In the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta*, that deals with the last days of the Buddha, we learn of a person called Subhadda who came to the Buddha and asked, “Are there emancipated spiritual men in other religious sects in the world?”

The Buddha replied, “I do not wish to talk about other religious sects. I will speak only about the views of my own religious sect. As long as the **Supernormal Eightfold Way** is practiced, the world would not be devoid of emancipated spiritual men.”

This clearly indicates that if we want to be **spiritually emancipated**, or to **solve the problem of existence**, or be **freed from the insecurity of life**, the path to be followed is the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**. This is why the method of meditation discussed in this booklet is based on this **Supernormal Eightfold Way** (*ariya aṭṭhangika magga*), as practised and taught by the Buddha in the Sutta Pitaka. It is not based on the *Visuddhi Magga*, the famous book on meditation, written by the well known author Buddhaghosha. This **Supernormal Eightfold Way** is as follows:

- (1) Harmonious Perspective (*Sammā Ditṭhi*)
- (2) Harmonious Orientation (*Sammā Sankappa*)
- (3) Harmonious Speech (*Sammā Vācā*)
- (4) Harmonious Action (*Sammā Kammanta*)
- (5) Harmonious Life Style (*Sammā Ājīva*)
- (6) Harmonious Exercise (*Sammā Vāyāma*)
- (7) Harmonious Attention (*Sammā Sati*)
- (8) Harmonious Equilibrium (*Sammā Samādhī*).

This Supernormal Eightfold Way has been explained in more detail in the first and second books on meditation published by us. The reader is encouraged to read them for further clarification.

[Is this Mindfulness?](#)

Is this mindfulness?

A mistake frequently made by practitioners is that the fourfold practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* is today translated as: “the **four establishments of mindfulness**.” But the English term mindfulness refers to **being aware** of or **recognizing** what is going on **outside**. *Satipaṭṭhāna*, however, means: **focusing** attention **within** (*sati* = attention + *upaṭṭhāna* = placing **within**). A more appropriate English term to translate the Pali term *satipaṭṭhāna* would be “**introspection**.” It is **looking within** in order to **observe the experience** (*sampajañña*) that is going on quite unconsciously within. What is going on **within** is the **emotional reaction to circumstances** outside. The emotion aroused is dependent on the interpretation made by the cognitive process.

In one of the Suttas the Buddha has given a very interesting analogy to explain *satipaṭṭhāna* (as introspection). Let us suppose there is a musical show, along with dancing, going on before an audience. A person is given a bowl full of oil, filled to the brim, and asked to walk between the front row of the audience and the stage on which the show is going on. A ferocious man carrying a sword is following him saying, “If you drop one drop of oil on the floor I will cut off your neck.” Imagine you are the one walking with the bowl of oil in your hand. What would you be doing? Will you be looking at the show, or looking at the bowl? No doubt your attention will be on the bowl. That is how the introspection (*satipaṭṭhāna*) has to be practiced. This will help you to understand the difference between “mindful awareness” and the “intensive introspection” that has to be carried out throughout the day, while walking, standing, sitting, and lying down.

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, recognised the need to eliminate emotions. He saw that the emotions were responsible, not only for all neuroses and psychoses, but also for all the crimes, wars and terrorism in the world. He saw that although emotions helped some animals to preserve their lives and even propagate, human beings have begun to use emotions even for destructive purposes that often harm themselves as well as others. Human beings, however, have something better than emotions, which can be used more constructively, and that is the ability to think rationally. This was why Freud said, “In place of the *id* there shall be the *ego*,” where *id* referred to the **emotions**, and the *ego* referred to the **rational faculty**. Erich Fromm, the Neo-Freudian quotes this passage often. Freud thought, however, that the emotions could not be rooted out, because they were inborn instincts that were built into the system. The only solution to this problem that he saw was **sublimation**, which was to direct the energy of the emotions into socially acceptable good channels. He also pointed out, however that to be **civilized** is to be **discontented**, because when civilized, the emotions are not adequately gratified.

The main concern of **Sigmund Freud** was the conflict between the *id* and the *ego*, but the modern day **Neo-Freudians** have begun to ignore this conflict and focus on a conflict between the *ego* and its **object**. They have begun to call the psychology of Freud an **id psychology**, and the modern psychology of the Neo-Freudians an **ego psychology** that emphasises the relation between the ego and its object. This ego psychology was really an idea introduced by **Alfred Adler** during the time of Freud. It appears that the Neo-Freudians have gone through a paradigm shift from the partly experiential mode of Sigmund Freud to the fully existential mode of Alfred Adler.

Modern **cognitive psychologists**, however, seem to have **solved the problem** between ego and the id by pointing out that **emotions can be eliminated**, by changing the way we interpret our circumstances (cognition). They are aware that the emotion that is aroused is dependent on how the **cognitive process interprets** the external circumstances. In cognitive psychotherapy, they attempt to remove the aroused emotion, by **changing this cognitive interpretation**.

The Buddha recognized this fact about the relationship between the cognitive and the affective processes more than twenty-six centuries ago. In the first verse in the book of verses called *Dhammapada*, he points out that “Cognition precedes all experience” (*mano pubbangamā dhammā*). He even made use of this fact to **absolutely eliminate** all self-centered emotions **within him**, and even **taught his disciples** to follow suit.

[Is Satipaṭṭhāna The Only Way?](#)

Is satipaṭṭhāna the only way?

Another fundamental mistake among many who practice Buddhist meditation today is to ignore the **Supernormal Eightfold Way** altogether and instead practice *satipaṭṭhāna*. They believe that the path to emancipation is *satipaṭṭhāna*. This, however, is due to a mistaken translation of the Pali statement in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*: “*ekayo ayan bhikkhave maggo*.” This Pali statement is translated to mean, “*satipaṭṭhāna* is the **only way** to **Nibbāna (Nirvana)**.” As a result, people have begun to practice *satipaṭṭhāna* **only**, with no reference to the **Supernormal Eightfold Way** (*ariya aṭṭhangika magga*).

When the mistaken practitioner is questioned, “why have you ignored the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**? The answer commonly given is, “the Supernormal Eightfold Way is only a thought moment (*cittakkhaṇa*),” which arises at the moment of enlightenment, when the *magga citta* is immediately followed by the *phala citta*. That *magga citta* is the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**, and *phala citta* is **Full comprehension** (*Paññā*). In other words, the **Supernormal Eightfold Way** (*ariya aṭṭhangika magga*) has mistakenly become a **mere thought moment** (*cittakkhaṇa*). The **Supernormal Eightfold Way** has also become the **final part** of the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*, instead of the *satipaṭṭhāna* being the final part of the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**. This **mistaken interpretation** of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* could be the reason for the **failure** of most serious meditators today, to attain **Arahatship** or the final Awakening.

[Golf As An Analogy](#)

Golf as an analogy

In attempting to explain the meaning of the statement “*ekāyano ayan bhikkhave maggo*,” in relation to the Supernormal Eightfold Way (*ariya aṭṭhangika magga*) we make use of the following analogy of the **game of Golf**:

*Most of us are familiar with **Golf** where players use long metal sticks called **clubs** to hit a little white ball towards, and finally into, a small hole called **cup**, in a manicured lawn called a **green**. The final stage of this game is to strike the small golf ball so that the ball will slowly roll over and enter the tiny hole or **cup**. This is not everything in the game, however. This is only the last portion, or end of the game.*

*The game begins far away from the hole. The hole cannot even be seen at the starting point. Therefore a flagstaff is kept at the hole for the player to know where the hole is. It is only at the end of the game that the player sees the hole and hits the ball to go straight into the tiny hole, in one stroke. This game can be compared to the practice of the Supernormal Eightfold Way (*ariya aṭṭhangika magga*).*

Just as in this game of Golf, the **Supernormal Eightfold Way** begins far away from the goal, which is **Nibbāna** (*Nirvana*). The beginning is the **Harmonious Perspective** (*sammā diṭṭhi*), which makes one **aware of the goal to be sought**, just as **the flagstaff** does in Golf. The **Harmonious Perspective** is an **intellectual comprehension** of the **problem** that we hope to solve, which is formulated as **suffering**, its **cause**, its **end**, and the **way** to its end. This problem and its solution is called the **Fourfold Supernormal Reality** (*cattāri ariya saccāni*), commonly translated as the Four Noble Truths.

The **end** of our game, which is comparable to the **Golf ball slowly rolling over** and falling into the tiny hole or cup, is the completion of the **Seven Steps to Awakening** (*satta bojjhanga*). The **Seven Steps to Awakening begins with Introspection** (*satipaṭṭhāna*), and ends at the fourth ecstasy with **apperception** (*upekkha*), resulting in **Nirvāna** (*Nibbāna*)

This is the end of the Supernormal Eightfold Way, which is **the Harmonious Equilibrium** (*sammā samādhi*). The step before this end is the harmonious attention (*satipaṭṭhāna*) that **goes straight into the Harmonious Equilibrium** by completing The Seven Steps to Awakening (*satta bojjhanga*). This is **similar to the last step** in the game of Golf, which is striking the small ball to go straight into the small hole or *cup*.

This means the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* is the **final and specific shot** that goes straight to **Nirvāna** (*Nibbāna*). The Pali statement: “*ekāyano ayan bhikkhave maggo ... Nibbānassa saccikiriya*,” means, “Monks, *this is the specific way to the single goal, which is Nibbāna*” (*eka* = single; *āyana* = going to).

[Satipaṭṭhāna Not the Beginning](#)

Satipaṭṭhāna not the beginning

Another important fact that needs attention is that practicing the *satipaṭṭhāna* is not the **first step in the path to Nibbāna** (*Nirvana*). Everyone knows that a student who has just entered the university for studies is not ready to sit for the final examination, until he/she has completed the course of studies. In the same way, it is only by **completing the first seven steps** on the **eight-stepped path** that one is ready to focus one’s attention on the **last step**, which is *satipaṭṭhāna* practice. Of course it is possible and even necessary to practice a certain level of introspection even at the beginning of the Supernormal Eightfold Way, but that level is different from the level of practice at this final point. This is why we have chosen to practice the path in three steps as follows:

- (1) **Selective thinking** (*anussati*)
 - = learning to eliminate the hindrances (*pahāna*)
 - = *sīla*
- (2) **Harmonious exercise** (*sammāppadhāna*)
 - = tranquillity (*samatha*)
 - = *samādhi*
- (3) **Seven Steps to Awakening** (*satta bojjhanga*)
 - = insight (*vipassanā*)
 - = *paññā*

It is useful to quote another important passage from the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta* quoted above, in order to explain the reason for our choice of the three steps we practice. The **Arahat Sariputta**, the chief disciple of the Buddha, came to the Buddha and expressed his great **appreciation** of the **Buddha** and his teaching **Dhamma**. The Buddha in answer **questioned** him as to **how he came to recognize** the value of the Buddha and the *Dhamma*. The **answer**, the *Arahat Sariputta* gave was that he knew it by **knowing the path to Nibbāna through his own experience**. He then **summarized the path to Nibbāna** in the form of **three steps**:

- (1) Overcoming the Five Hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*) = **anussati**
- (2) Four focuses of introspective attention (*cattāri satipaṭṭhāna*) = **sammāppadhāna**
- (3) Treading the Seven Steps to Awakening (*satta bojjhanga*) = **satta bojjhanga**.

The three stages in our method of meditation are exactly the three stages described by the *Arahat Sariputta*.

- (1) **Selective thinking** (*anussati*) is the way to **overcome the five hindrances**.
- (2) The **Four Harmonious Exercises** (*sammāppadhāna*) is the way to complete the practice of **introspective attention** (*cattāri satipaṭṭhāna*).
- (3) The practice of **The Seven Steps to Awakening** begins with **introspective attention** (*satipaṭṭhāna*), and ends with **apperception** (*upekkhā*).

It is at this last stage that a **paradigm shift** occurs, Super- perception (*abhiññā*) and the individual **awakens from the dream of existence** (*paññā*), which results in the **breaking of bonds** (*arahatta*) or emancipation (*vimutti*), thus entering the “**imperturbable serenity**” (*NIBBĀNA*).

[Buddha Revealed The Path](#)

Buddha revealed the path

Another important quotation that supports our method is from the **Anāpānasati sutta** in the Majjhima Nikaya, where the Buddha points out:

“Monks, when **Attentiveness to Breathing** (*anapanasati*) is cultivated and developed, it is of great benefit and great profit. It helps get rid of the five hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*).

- (1) When attentiveness to breathing is cultivated and developed, it fulfills the **Four-fold Introspection** (*satipaṭṭhāna*).
- (2) When the **Four-fold Introspection** (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is cultivated and developed, they fulfill the **Seven Steps to Awakening** (*satta bojjhanga*).
- (3) When the **Seven Steps to Awakening** (*satta bojjhanga*) are cultivated and developed, it results in **Full Comprehension** (*paññā*) and **Emancipation** (*vimutti*).”

This passage reveals that it is when the **Seven Steps to Awakening** (*bojjhanga*s) are developed that the **Paradigm Shift** (*abhiññā*) occurs, which ends in **Full Comprehension** (*paññā*) and **Awakening** (*sambodhi*) and **Emancipation** (*vimutti*), resulting in the **Imperturbable Serenity** (*Nibbāna*).

If we examine the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, we find that when the **Four-fold Introspection** (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is developed,

- (1) The **Five Hindrances** are removed first,
- (2) Secondly the **Five Constituents of Personality** (*pañca upādānakkhandha*) are **comprehended**,
- (3) Thirdly the **Seven Steps to Awakening** are **completed**,
- (4) Fourthly and finally the **Four-fold Supernormal Reality** is fully comprehended (*paññā*).

This clearly conveys the idea that the **real Awakening** occurs only by **completing the Seven Steps to Awakening**, which is at the end of the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**. This leads to the **Full comprehension** (*paññā*) of the **Fourfold Supernormal Reality**, resulting in emancipation (*vimutti*) that ends in the **Imperturbable Serenity, Nirvana** (*Nibbāna*).

[Nine Great Knowledges](#)

Nine Great Knowledges

It is interesting to note that the **Visuddhimagga** also refersto “**Nine Great Knowledges**” (*nava mahā vidassanā ñāṇa*). Such knowledges are not mentioned anywhere in the suttas, nor even in the *Ratavinīta Sutta*, on which this particular system of *vipassanā bhāvanā* is based. This implies that this method in the *Visuddhimagga* could be a **later addition** historically.

It is also interesting to note that there is a **passage in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta**, which is frequently repeated within the Sutta itself, with regard to the **Fourfold Focus of Attention** (*satipaṭṭhāna*). It is as follows:

- (A) One **sees the body** as body **subjectively**, one sees the body as body **objectively**, one sees the body as body **both subjectively and objectively**. (*Iti ajjhataṃ vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati, bahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati, ajjhata bahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati*) – (3)
- (B) One abides **seeing how the body comes into being**. One abides seeing **how the body ceases to be**. One abides seeing how the body **comes into being and ceases to be**. (*Samudaya dhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati, vaya dhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati, samudaya vaya dhammānupassī vā kāyasmim viharati*) – (3)
- (C) One **regards the body is**, when one pays attention to it, yet only as a matter of knowing or paying attention. (*Atthi kāyo ’ti vā panassa sati paccupaṭṭhitā hoti yāvadeva ñāṇāmatṭā ya patissati matṭāya*) – (1)
- (D) One **abides independent**. (*anissito ca viharati*) – (1)
- (E) One **does not personalize anything in the world**. (*na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*) – (1).

Similar statements are repeated regarding the **feelings** (*vedanā*), **mood** (*citta*), and **concepts** (*dhammā*). This adds up to nine levels of insight.

These seem to be **nine stages of insight maturity** that one has to go through as one progresses in the process of **Awakening**. This could probably be the real “**Nine Great Knowledges**” (*nava mahā vidassanā ñāṇa*), which are referred to in the *Visuddhi Magga* but not mentioned in any Sutta other than the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. The nine great knowledge’s mentioned in the *Visuddhi Magga*, however, are not found anywhere in the Suttas or Vinaya.

Seeing Things As They Are

Seeing things as they are

A statement we often come across in writings on Buddhism is “**Seeing things as they are**” which is supposed to be a quotation from the Buddha. It is really a **translation** of a statement of the Buddha, which was in Pali language. The Pali statement is “*yathā bhūtam pajānāti.*” We have translated it as, **understanding of how things come to be.** We are not attempting to argue against the common translation. We only point out that the common translation, and our translation are based on two different ways of thinking as follows:

The common translation = **seeing things as they are** = existential thinking

Our translation = **understanding of how things come to be** = experiential thinking

We may compare this to another well-known statement, connected with a person called Bahiya Dharuciriya. This statement: “*diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattam bhavissati*” is often translated as, **in the seen there is only the seeing**, which is understood as “**looking at something**, without **thinking about it.**” This interpretation, however, makes it look like, “guarding the senses” (*indriya-samvara*).

Our interpretation, however, is: “focusing attention on the **process of seeing** instead of looking at **the object that is seen.**” This means, becoming aware of the **process of perception**, rather than the **object perceived.** This change in perception is what we call **apperception.**

When one focuses attention on the **object** perceived, **the experience** is dichotomized into: a **subjective** and an **objective.** The **objective** is alienated as an “**external object,**” and the **subjective** is personalized as “**mine**” or “**my self.**” This leads on to an “**emotional relationship**” between the **subject** and the **object**, which ends up in: grief, lamentation, pain, depression, and exhaustion. The sufferer may not always notice this experience of **suffering**, but others often do. For example: a couple in love is always suffering. They are happy when they are together. The moment they separate they are unhappy. Others can see this, but the couple never sees it. Instead, they think they are enjoying. This experience of the lovers is similar to the experience of the infant with the mother. Romantic love is a rehearsal of the experience of childhood.

Apperception is focusing attention on the experience, instead of the object perceived, which brings about a **paradigm shift** from “*existential thinking*” which is called Super-perception (*abhiññā*). Existential thinking is aware of a subject that exists and an object that exists. With this existence comes an emotional relationship between the subject and the object. **Experiential thinking** looks only at the process of perception that creates the subject and the object, and therefore sees no real existing subject or object. When there is no real subject or object, there is **no emotional relationship**, and therefore there is **no suffering** experienced. One is then **absent in the world of emotional existence**, and therefore **one does not really exist**, even though the body is seen to exist. If one does not emotionally exist, how can there be sorrow or death? This is the **Awakening from the dream of existence** (*sammā sambodhi*). This was how Bahiya Dharuciriya became an “*emancipator*” or a “*Bond Breaker*” (*Arahat*) immediately after listening to the Buddha.

It is important to note that the **Seven Steps to Awakening** begins with **introspection** (*satipaṭṭhāna*) and ends with **apperception** (*upekkhā*). This term *upekkhā* is generally translated as “**equanimity,**” but the more precise translation is “**apperception.**” The reason for this is that the term *upekkhā* originates from *upa* + *ikkhati* (*upa* = inside + *ikkhati* = seeing). This means, “**seeing the inside.**” This we understand as **looking at** the **process** of perception, “**instead** of looking at the **object** perceived. To **perceive** is to see the **object**, and to **apperceive** is to see the **process** of perception. So instead of **perceiving**, we **apperceive.** The *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* supports this idea, when it says: “The emancipated individual, and even the Buddha super-perceives a solid (*paṭhavim paṭhavito abhijānāti*) This super-perception involves a paradigm shift from existential thinking to experiential thinking. It is because the emancipated individual and Buddha **super-perceives** (*abhijānāti*) that they do not conclude that the solid exists (*paṭhavito na maññati*). This is explained further in our discussion of the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta*, later in this booklet.

WHAT Of The System

Cultivation of the Seven Steps to Awakening (*Satta Bojjhanga*)

WHAT of the system

Having explained the WHY and the HOW of our system of meditation, at the third, the advanced, and the final level, we now get on to a discussion of the WHAT of the system. As we said earlier **what we do** is the cultivation of the **Seven Steps to Awakening** that ends up in **Awakening from the Dream of Existence.**

The **Seven Steps to Awakening** are as follows:

- (1) Systematic Introspection – (*Satipaṭṭhāna*)
- (2) Investigation of experience – (*Dhammavicaya*)
- (3) Awakening strength of the cognitive (mano) – (*Viriya*)
- (4) Cognitive ecstasy – (*Pīti*)
- (5) Physical Relaxation – (*Passaddhi*)
- (6) Affective tranquility (*citta*) – (*Samādhi*)
- (7) Apperception – (*Upekkhā*)



1) Systematic Introspection (*Satipaṭṭhāna*)

Seven Steps to Awakening

1) Systematic Introspection (*Satipaṭṭhāna*)

This **Systematic Introspection** (*satipaṭṭhāna*) cannot be performed properly without completing the first and second levels of meditation practice given in the first and second booklets on meditation. This practice of the third level is only a continuation of the second level of meditation practice. This means these three levels of practice gradually flow from one to the other, because they are three parts of the Supernormal Eightfold Way. They are not separate practices.

This practice at the third level comes after the **Harmonious Exercise** (*sammā vāyāma*), which was practiced at the second level, and which included four parts as follows:

- (1) Prevention (*Sañvara*)
- (2) Elimination (*Pahāna*)
- (3) Cultivation (*Bhāvanā*)
- (4) Maintenance (*Anurakkhaṇa*).

The practice of **systematic introspection** (*satipaṭṭhāna*) was the third stage in this fourfold practice. Without going through the first two stages, it is not possible to get into the third stage. The first two stages are:

- (1) Withdrawing attention from perceptual images (*indriya saṅvara*),
- (2) Withdrawing attention from memory images and imagination of the future (*pahāna*).

In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* the Buddha points out how the introspection should be practiced: “The attention that is normally focused on external surroundings, is withdrawn from surroundings and focused within” (*parimukan satin upaṭṭhapetva*). In other words, it is only by withdrawing attention from the objective surroundings that one can focus attention subjectively inwards. This focus of attention inwards is achieved in four ways: Focusing on the movements of the body, focusing on the feelings in the body, focusing on the emotional state or mood, and focusing on the thoughts in the mind.

The two procedures in the first two stages of the fourfold practice is the withdrawal of attention from the external surroundings. The third and the fourth procedures is the Systematic Introspection, where the attention is focussed, not on objects perceived, but on the unconscious emotional reaction to those objects that go on within. This procedure of consciously focusing on the unconscious reactions to circumstances, stops the unconscious emotional reactions, because the unconscious reactions cannot continue consciously. They can continue only unconsciously. This procedure is somewhat similar to the psychoanalytic procedure of Sigmund Freud.

In practicing this introspective attention, one becomes aware of one’s emotional reaction to external sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches in the present, as well as emotional reactions to memories of the past, and to imaginations about the future. When the **attention is focused within** in this way, the reaction is noticed **in four ways**. Therefore this practice of Systematic Introspection (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is divided into four practices as follows:

- (1) *Kāyānupassanā* – Observing the physical manifestation of the reaction in the body, as movements or tensions in the body.
- (2) *Vedanānupassanā* – Observing the manifestation as feelings in the body: pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.
- (3) *Cittānupassanā* – Observing the manifestation in the form of emotional excitements, or calmness of temperament.
- (4) *Dhammānupassana* – Observing the manifestation in the form of thoughts in the mind, which are interpretations of circumstances past, present, and future.

Thus the emotional reaction is observed in four different ways: as two physical manifestations and two mental manifestations. As one becomes more and more aware of these reactions, they begin to stop because the unconscious process cannot go on when it has become conscious. The consequence is relaxation of the body and calmness of the

temperament. In other words, all emotional disturbances disappear, and one begins to enter a state of mental tranquility and physical relaxation. In other words one enters a state of mental and physical equilibrium (*samādhi*). To achieve this state of mental equilibrium, it is essential to maintain the Systematic Introspection throughout the day, without interruption, while walking, standing, sitting, or even lying down.

[2\) Investigation of the Experience within \(*Dhammavicaya*\)](#)

Seven Steps to Awakening

2) Investigation of the Experience within (*Dhammavicaya*)

This Systematic Introspection when properly practiced ends up in entering the second step to Awakening. This **second step** (*dhammavicaya*) is to **closely examine** the emotional reaction to external stimulation by the environment. This helps one recognize that it is the **interpretation of circumstances**, by the cognitive process that **aroused the emotions** that made one react emotionally to the circumstances (*mano pubbangamā dhammā*).

This makes one realize that most interpretations are conditioned by our past experiences in childhood. Some interpretations are influenced by the culture we are born into, while others are conditioned by the nature of the influences we grew up with. Whatever circumstances we face today are interpreted through past conditionings. Our present worries, feelings of inadequacy, frustrations, fears and fantasies about the future are therefore only mere concepts based on past experiences. To take them seriously is to create further emotional disturbances (*dukkha*).

When this is understood with a tranquil mind, it helps one realize that most interpretations are not necessarily facts. When this is realized, the strength of the interpretation is diminished. Then even the validity of the interpretation is doubted, resulting in the total elimination of the interpretations as well as the self-centered emotions.

This **investigation of the cognitive interpretation** occurred as a result of the practice of Systematic Introspection. This helped one realize that the emotions were aroused depending on the interpretation of circumstances. By changing the interpretation, it was possible to eliminate the emotional agitations.

This was what happened in the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud even though it was not fully realized by him, because he thought emotions were instincts that could not be eliminated. It was only quite recently that Western psychologists began to realize the importance of the cognitive process in controlling the emotions. It is now used in cognitive psychotherapy. Yet it was the Buddha who made use of this fact to the fullest extent more than twenty-five centuries ago, when he eradicated all emotions without leaving even a trace of it, and became a Buddha by **Awakening from the dream existence**. In the well-known Buddhist book of verses called the *Dhammapada* the first verse points out clearly that the cognitive process precedes the affective and therefore it is possible to eliminate emotions by right thinking.

Cognition precedes all experience,

cognition predominates, and cognition creates
With destructive cognition if one speaks or acts
Pain follows one, as the wheel follows the drawer of the cart

*Mano pubbangamā dhammā, mano seṭṭhā, manomayā
Manasā ce paduṭṭhena bhāsati vā karoti vā
Tato nam dukkhaman veti, Cakkhan va vahato padam*

Cognition precedes all experience,

cognition predominates, and cognition creates
With constructive cognition if one speaks or acts
Joy follows one, as the shadow follows the runner

*Mano pubbangamā dhammā mano seṭṭhā manomayā
Manasā ce pasannena bhāsati vā karoti vā
Tatho nam sukhamanveti, chāyāva anapāyini*

-- Buddha

Another well-known statement of the Buddha is: “The affective (*citta*), Oh disciples, is naturally immaculate. Only foreign pollutants pollute it. The uneducated are ignorant of this fact. Thus they remain impure.” (*Pabassaramidam bhikkhave cittam āgantukehi upakkhilesehi upakkiliṭṭham*).

The Buddha has pointed out that the desire for something pleasant arises depending on the way one describes the object. If one described it as something pleasant a desire arises. To overcome the desire one must reflect on its unpleasantness. In the same way, if we hate taking a bitter medicine, we can think of its health giving properties. By thinking of its pleasantness in this way, we can tolerate the distaste. Similarly, the Buddha taught the reflection on the threefold nature of all things (*tilakkhana*): instability (*anicca*), painfulness (*dukkha*), and impersonality (*anatta*), in order to overcome one's attachment to things of the world. Some critics call this pessimism without knowing its therapeutic value.

The divided mind (*Citta/Mano*)

The Buddha drew attention to the fact that there is no entity called mind, or soul separate from the body, which can even leave the body and travel to other places or even die and be reborn (Mahātanhasankhaya Sutta, Majjima Nikaya).

What we commonly refer to as the mind are only two activities of the body. They are cognition (*mano*) and affection (*citta*). Cognition is rational and affection is emotional. Often these two activities come in conflict. When they are in conflict the emotional affective often tend to win. Generally people are dominated by their affective emotions, rather than their cognitive reason. The reasoning cognitive faculty of the human being tends to become the slave of the emotional affective faculty. This is why even though the rational faculty of the human being is far more advanced today, with all the modern scientific technology, crime has not ceased in the world, and war has not come to an end. Modern science has created the nuclear bomb that arouses in people the fear of an imminent nuclear holocaust. Though the modern world is dreaming of love, peace, and happiness, it is in reality full of crime, war, and terrorism, today. This is because the emotions dominate the world. Therefore the Buddha said:

Emotions dominate the world. Emotions create distress
Emotion is that one thing, to which all stand spellbound

Cittena nīyati loko, cittena parikassati
Cittassa eka dhammassa, sabbeva vasamanvagu

– Buddha

The teaching of the Buddha is an effort to teach people how to make the cognitive faculty (*mano*) dominate the mind rather than the affective faculty (*citta*). This is also the meaning of maturity of mind, according to the teachings of the Buddha.

Even Sigmund Freud recognized this sense of maturity when he said: “In place of the id there shall be the *ego*.” This is also the reason why Freud called the cognitive faculty the *ego* and the affective faculty the *id*. *Ego* is the Latin form of “self” and *id* is the Latin form of “it” the neuter gender. This means, according to Freud, one should not personalize the emotional id, and instead one should personalize the rational *ego*. If one personalized the ego, one would act according to reason rather than to emotions. It is when one personalizes emotions that one is carried away by emotions. Emotions are not what we do consciously, they only happen to us unconsciously, depending on the necessary conditions. This is why they say, “love is blind.” In fact, even anger is blind, and so is worry. Often emotions put us into difficulty, quite unconsciously. This is what Daniel Goleman called emotional highjacking. To overcome this power of the unconscious emotions over us, we must stop personalizing the emotions. Instead we should personalize reason and act rationally rather than emotionally.

Daniel Goleman, the author of the famous book “Emotional Intelligence” repeats the same idea when he defines emotional intelligence as: knowing one's emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships” (page 46 - 47). In other words, emotional intelligence is not being carried away by emotions but using emotions intelligently. This can be done, according to Freud, only by personalizing the *ego*, and not the *id*.

[3\) Strength of the Cognitive over the Affective \(*Viriya*\)](#)

Seven Steps to Awakening

3) Strength of the Cognitive over the Affective (*Viriya*)

The realization that the cognitive process (*mano*) precedes the affective process (*citta*) gives strength to the cognitive process to overcome the emotions. The cognitive process has only to change the interpretation of circumstances and the emotional excitement stops.

Self-centered emotions have been useful for the lower animals for the preservation of life, but they can also be very destructive, especially in the case of the human being who can use his intelligence to make it brutally destructive. When the thinking cognitive process (*mano*) begins to realize the need to control emotions, and the power it has to control the emotions, it experiences a degree of satisfaction.

This strength of the cognitive process arose because the cognitive process examined the experience within, and the examination was done because introspection was practiced. Thus systematic introspection flowed into examination of experience, which flowed into awakening the strength of the cognitive process, which flowed into satisfaction of the cognitive process, which we call ecstasy (*pīti*).

The experience within was the emotional reaction to stimulation of the senses by the environment. By examining this experience the cognitive process realized that the emotional excitement arose only due to the way it interpreted the incident in the environment. When that was recognized the cognitive process was satisfied. This way the examination of experience (*dhamma vicaya*) gradually flows into cognitive ecstasy, or standing out of emotional excitements, in the seven steps to Awakening.

[4\) Cognitive ecstasy \(*Pīti*\)](#)

Seven Steps to Awakening

4) Cognitive ecstasy (*Pīti*)

When the cognitive process was able to gain control over the blind and powerful affective process, the affective process became free from emotional disturbances, guilt and remorse. When the cognitive process was free and clear, the cognitive process experienced an inner peace that stands out of emotional disturbances, an ecstasy (*pīti*). With the experience of this cognitive ecstasy the muscles in the body relaxes (*pīti manassa kāyaṃ passambhati*). Thus is the gradual flow of events as one treads through the seven steps to awakening.

[5\) Relaxation of the Body \(*Passaddhi*\)](#)

Seven Steps to Awakening

5) Relaxation of the Body (*Passaddhi*)

When the body is relaxed the body feels comfortable (*passaddha kāyo sukhaṃ vediyati*). With this cognitive ecstasy and physical comfort the mind becomes free of all five hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*) that disturb the mind. So the affective process becomes still (*sukhino cittaṃ samādhīyati*) and enters equilibrium. This too is the natural flow of events in the process of awakening. When the cognitive process experiences an inner peace by standing out of emotions through ecstasy, the body relaxes and the affective process becomes calm, tranquil, and still, and so experiences a state of equilibrium, which is called *samādhī*.

[6\) Tranquility of Temperament \(*Samādhī*\)](#)

Seven Steps to Awakening

6) Tranquility of Temperament (*Samādhī*)

When the mind is free of the five hindrances, the five constituents of ecstasy (*jhāna*) are experienced: Conceptual thinking in two parts: 1) inquiry (*vitakka*), and 2) inference (*vicāra*), 3) cognitive ecstasy (*pīti*), 4) Physical comfort (*sukha*) due to

relaxation of the body, and 5) the unified mind (*ekaggatā*). The mind becomes unified due to absence of emotional disturbances or cognitive dissonance (*vicikicca*). This means, one has entered the first ecstasy (*paṭhamajjhāna*). This is the sixth step in the seven stepped process of awakening. Cognitive ecstasy flows into Physical relaxation, which flows into tranquillity of the affective process, resulting in the **first ecstasy**. Thus is the gradual flow of events in the process of awakening leading to stillness of mind, or mental equilibrium (*samādhi*).

[7\) Apperception \(*Upekkhā*\)](#) Seven Steps to Awakening

7) Apperception (*Upekkhā*)

Once in the first ecstasy, the process gradually flows into the second, the third, and the fourth ecstasy. At the fourth ecstasy the mind is unified and focused within on the process of perception (*upekkhā-ekaggatā*). The Seven Steps to Awakening began with introspection (*satipaṭṭhāna*) and ended in apperception (*upekkhā*). This resulting in a paradigm shift from existence to experience (*abhiññā*). As we mentioned earlier, introspection (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is **looking** within, and apperception (*upekkhā*) is **seeing** what is within. What is within is not the **object perceived** but the **process of perception**. This **focus** of attention **on the process of perception** instead of the object perceived is what we call **apperception**. **Apperception** is a shift from an awareness of the **object perceived**, to an awareness of the **process of perception**. It is a withdrawal of attention from the external object perceived, and focusing attention on the internal process of perception.

Once the attention is focused on the process of perception, a **paradigm shift** occurs. This **paradigm shift** is started by apperception, but ends in **Super-perception** (*abhiññā*). The **paradigm shift** is a shift from an **awareness of existence** to an **awareness of experience**. This paradigm shift is also known as the **Release from Existence** (*bhava nirodha*). The experience of this **paradigm shift** makes one a spiritually emancipated **Breaker of Bonds** (*Arahat*).

[The Paradigm Shift \(*nirodha samāpatti*\)](#)

The paradigm shift (*nirodha samāpatti*)

To focus on the **object** perceived is to become aware of the object perceived as existing, while the **subject** that perceives the object is also seen to exist. The subject is **personalized** as “mine,” thus creating a sense of “I” or “self” (*etan mama, eso hamasmi, eso me attati*). This way of thinking is what we call existential thinking.

Instead of thinking existentially this way, if one focuses attention on the process of perception and not on the object perceived, then one sees that it is the process of perception that creates the object as well as the subject. The existence of the subject and the object is seen as an **appearance** and not a **reality**. It then is an illusion or a delusion; an illusion being a perceptual fallacy, while a **delusion** is a conceptual fallacy. This kind of thinking where the focus is on the experience of perception, rather than the subject or object, is called **experiential thinking**.

This is why the Buddha points out in the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta*, that the normal *putujjana* perceives a solid as a solid and concludes there is a solid. The **emancipated Arahat Super-perceives** (*abhiññāti*) a solid and does not conclude that a solid exists. This is the difference between **perception** and **Super-perception**.

This change from **existential** thinking to **experiential** thinking is the **relieving paradigm shift** (*nirodha samāpatti*). It means one is relieved from the **sense of existence** (*bhava*) and **existence disappears**. When existence is no more, birth, ageing and death are no more. This is the **end of all grief, lamentation, pain, distress and exhaustion**. It is in this way that the **great mass of suffering** comes to an end (*eva metassa kevalassa dukkhakkandassa nirodho hoti*).

This was why the Buddha said: “When the mind is fully tranquillized *Dhamma* appears (*samāhite citte dhammam pātubhāvo*), and also one gains the understanding of how things come to be” (*samāhite citte yathābhūtam pajānāti*).

To clarify this point further it is helpful to make use of an **analogy**. Suppose we keep a bird in front of a mirror, the bird begins to peck at the figure in the mirror, backed by the assumption that the figure in the mirror is another bird behind the mirror. If, on the other hand, we place a human face in front of the mirror, the human being knows that the figure in the

mirror is a reflection of one's own face. Here the human being is aware of the process, by which the image in the mirror is seen, and therefore knows that there is no human being behind the mirror.

In a similar way, the emancipated Arahant is aware of the process by which the object is seen, and therefore does not come to the conclusion that the object really exists. This is what we called **Super-perception**, as distinct from the **ordinary perception** of the normal human being. When an object is perceived normally, the object is seen to exist outside, while the process of perception is seen to exist inside. In other words, both subject and object are seen as existing. This way of thinking is existential thinking. What is experienced objectively is seen as external physical matter, and what is experienced subjectively is seen as mental and personal. In other words, we personalize the subjective and alienate the objective. What is personalized becomes the personality or "self" that is supposed to exist inside. What is alienated becomes the "world" that exists outside. This personalization of the subjective is what is called *upādāna*. This is why we do not translate the term *upādāna* as "grasping" or "clinging." (*upa*=inside; *ādāna*=taking). To take inside is to personalize.

It is interesting to note that when we think of ourselves, we are thinking of an image in our mind, not a real existing object that can be seen. This image can even change in different circumstances. When someone takes a picture of me and shows it to me, I begin to think it cannot be my real "self," because it is different from the picture I have in my mind. This proves that what I call my "self" is only a series of pictures in my mind that changes from time to time, and a series of sensations in my body that also changes from time to time. In other words, what I call my "self" is only a collection of cinematographic pictures and sensations stored in my memory, which I can replay when ever I need. This was why the Buddha called it the fivefold mass of personalized constituents of personality (*pañca upādānak khandha*).

Existential thinking brings about a relationship between the "self" that exists, and the "object" perceived as existing. The relationship is filled with emotions in the form of likes and dislikes. Therefore it is a paradigm of emotional existence. We normally live in this paradigm, which is a mass of suffering. It is this paradigm that the Buddha called **Being** (*bhava*). This paradigm of **being** is the **paradigm of insecurity and suffering** (*dukkha*) because it is filled with **emotional disturbances**.

When we begin to become **aware of the process of perception** this way, we begin to realize that suffering is involved with this way of thinking and we begin to think in a different way. The **object perceived** is only a **creation** of the **process of perception**. When we focus our attention on the process of perception we are aware that what we see is not a real object outside but a mental image which is inside our head. In other words, both subject and object are not seen as existing as in existential thinking. Whatever is seen, heard, smelt, tasted and touched, is only a sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch but the **object** is understood to be only a **product** constructed by the process of perception.

In other words, the object perceived is not a **reality** but an **illusion or delusion**. An illusion is a **perceptual fallacy**, and a delusion is a **conceptual fallacy**. The object perceived is seen as a mental image (*rūpa*), like a picture taken by a camera. The mental image is formed by the process of construction (*sankhāra*) the colours seen are the sensations (*saññā*), which are felt as pleasant or unpleasant (*vedanā*). The images are identified as objects (*viññāṇa*) by giving them names (*nāma*).

This transformation of thinking is the **paradigm shift** from **existential** thinking to **experiential** thinking. Then there is neither subject nor object nor emotional relationship with its insecurity and suffering. There is only the process of perception, tranquility and peace of mind. This is how one **Awakens from the dream of existence**. In so doing all suffering comes to an end.

[A Gradual Reduction of Experience](#)

A gradual reduction of experience

The dream of existence is a mental process. The mental process creates the dream. Therefore to awaken is to become aware of this mental process. To become aware of the mental process we must stand out of the mental process. This standing out is a gradual reduction of experience.

We have already pointed out that the meaning of the term "ecstasy," as we use it, means standing out (*ec* = out; *stasy* = standing). It is through a process of standing out that a gradual reduction of experience takes place. To reduce experience is to stop mental activity. So in other words, what we are doing is a gradual stopping of mental activity. When one enters the first ecstasy, with the elimination of the five hindrances, and the appearance of the five Constituents of Ecstasy (*jhānāṅga*), one has come out of the "world of emotional activity" (*kāma loka*) and entered a state of tranquillity, which is the first ecstasy (*paṭhamañ jhānaṅ*) or standing out, or reduction of experience, or stopping of mental activity.

From there on, one can proceed further, by a gradual reduction of experience, into the other levels of ecstasy. Progress on the path depends on a gradual abandoning or standing out of the former level. **What is called samādhi is a gradual reduction of experience**. It is like climbing a flight of steps, where at every step forward, we abandon the former step. The

first four ecstasies, or standing out, is a gradual reduction of the affective experience. Following is an enumeration of this gradual reduction of the constituents of experience, as one passes through the four ecstasies:

- (1) First ecstasy (*jhāna*) includes:– inference (*vitakka*), inquiry (*vicāra*) (= conceptual thinking), serenity (*pīti*), comfort (*sukha*), stillness (*ekaggatā*)
- (2) Second ecstasy (*jhāna*) includes:– serenity, comfort, stillness.
- (3) Third ecstasy (*jhāna*) includes: – comfort, stillness
- (4) Fourth ecstasy (*jhāna*) includes: – stillness, apperception (*upekkhā*) – (no breathing but respiration).

[Apperception is Non-perception](#)

Apperception is non-perception

It is important to understand that at the fourth ecstasy, a change in the focus occurs: Instead of the focus being directed towards the **object perceived**, the focus is directed towards **the process of perception**. The result is called **apperception**, which means becoming aware of the **process of perception**, instead of the **object perceived**. It is at this point that one becomes aware of the **five constituents of the process of perception**, which are today translated as the “**five aggregates**.” These **constituents of the process of perception** (*pañcakkhandha*) when **personalized** (*upādāna*) becomes the **personality** or “**self**.” In other words, **personalization** produces the **personality** or **self**.

It is at this stage that a distinction is made between the **self** and the **not self**. Personalizing (*upādāna*) the **subjective process** makes it “**mine**,” and **alienating** the object makes it “**not mine**.” In other words, what is **personalized** (*upādāna*) turns it into the personality (*upādāna paccayā bhavo*.” What is alienated becomes the external object. It is the external object that we may fall in love with or begin to hate. To fall in love is to want to make the “**not mine**” object “**mine**.”

[Reduction of The Cognitive Experience](#)

Reduction of the cognitive experience

If one **continues** the reduction of experience beyond this point, the **gradual reduction** of the **cognitive experience** begins. This reduction of the cognitive experience is also a case of **letting go of the former** level of cognition. Each progressive level is a letting go, or an absence of the former level of experience, or a stopping of mental activity. This **cognitive reduction** also takes four steps as follows:

- (1) **The realm of infinite space** (*akāsanantāyatana*) – the objects perceived (*rūpa*) are absent.
- (2) **The realm of infinite perception** (*viññānañcāyatana*) – attention is focused on the process of perception.
- (3) **The realm of nothing** (*akincaññāyatana*) – the attention is withdrawn from the process of perception and focused on nothing.
- (4) **The realm of neither sensation nor no sensation** (*neva saññā nāsaññāyatana*) – the attention is withdrawn even from the awareness of nothing. Therefore the attention is not focused on any sensation, though not remaining totally unconscious. This is being at the threshold of consciousness.

The above four levels of experience are levels of cognitive reduction. The two teachers of the *Bodhisatta*, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Rama Putta, had both reached only the realm of nothing (*akincaññāyatana*). It was Uddaka Rama, the teacher of the second teacher, who had entered the realm of **neither sensation nor no sensation** (*neva saññā na asaññāyatana*). The Bodhisatta learned from the second teacher how to reach that state and did reach that state himself. Yet he wanted to go further but there was no one to teach him how.

This was why the *Bodhisatta* decided to join the five ascetics and practice asceticism. He practiced asceticism to the ultimate level. He fasted till he became almost a skeleton, and even tried to stop breathing until he fell unconscious and people thought he was dead.

[Success Through Self-reliance](#)

Success through self-reliance

He woke up, however, and it was then that he began to think: “All these days I have been trying to learn from others, and do what other people do. I had ignored my own qualifications (*pāramitā*) that I had earned, through the infinite sacrifices I had made, during my journey through the endless **chain of births and deaths** (*saṃsāra*). Thinking this way, he recalled how he entered the **first ecstasy** (*jhāna*) as a child, not by learning from another but by an inborn tendency. Then he thought: “Now I will begin to follow my **natural inclination to let go of everything**.” So he let go of all his lust, hate, and delusions, and automatically entered the first ecstasy (*jhāna*), then by gradually letting go in degrees he entered the second ecstasy, then the third, then the fourth, then the realm of infinite space, the realm of infinite perception, the realm of nothingness, the realm of neither sensation nor no sensation, and then **the cessation of all sensation and feeling**.

This last stage called **cessation of sensation and feeling** (*saññā vedayita nirodha*) was the **ultimate level** in the reduction of the cognitive experience. There was no level further than this. This is the **complete disappearance** of the cognitive experience. It is **the absence of all experience**. This level is the level of **absolute unconsciousness** (*avijjā*). At this level the **physical activity of metabolism** (*āyu sankhāra*) is present, along with the temperature of the body (*ushna*), but **no mental activity of any kind** is present. It is **similar to** the state called **hibernation** that is found in the lives of some animals like the bear. These animals remain in a dormant state, alive but unconscious, during the cold winter, but wake up from that state during the spring.

This **state** which is called the **cessation of sensation and feeling** (*saññā vedayita nirodha*), which is **similar to the state called hibernation**, is often **misunderstood** as the **experience of Nibbāna** (*Nirvana*). This is a **common misunderstanding**. The real meaning of the **experience of Nibbāna** (*Nirvana*) will be explained in due course.

[The Mind is Understood](#)

The mind is understood

This stopping of experience, called **cessation of sensation and feeling** (*saññā vedayita nirodha*) indicates, however, that what we call the mind is not another **entity separate from the body**. It is only an **activity of the body**, which can be started or stopped at will, just like breathing. Modern scientific research on the brain seems to confirm this fact.

Mind and body seems to be the same activity viewed from two different angles. When this activity called mind is **observed objectively**, it is seen as an **activity of the body**. When this same activity is **observed subjectively**, it is seen as a **mental activity**. This makes it clear that what we call the **body** is an objective experience, while what we call the **mind** is a subjective experience. The Buddha has pointed out that what we commonly refer to as **mind** are merely **three such activities**, which are today known scientifically as **activities of the nervous system**. They are: **perception** (*viññāṇa*), **cognition** (*mano*), and **affection** (*citta*). Modern scientific findings point out that **Perception** is the reaction of **the senses** to stimulation by the environment. **Cognition** is the activity of the **cerebral cortex** of the human brain, and **affection** is the activity of the **endocrine system** of the body, dependent on the limbic system of the brain.

There is also evidence to show that there is a part of the brain called the Reticular Activating System (RAS) that can toggle between cognitive activities of *mano* and the affective activities of *citta* so that a person can at one time be emotionally activated ignoring the principles of behaviour recognized by the *mano*, and at another time begin to be calm and composed following good principles of behaviour and good manners. The story of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde reminds us of this kind of toggling behaviour. This kind of toggling is also displayed in some people who get drunk by ingesting alcohol. This also happens to all of us sometimes when in a fit of anger or sexual obsession. This is why this introspective awareness is so important in our lives. It can stop this unconscious activity and begin to act consciously and rationally.

[Awakening From The Dream of Existence](#)

Awakening from the dream of existence

The Bodhisatta did not remain forever in this unconscious or hibernated state called **cessation of sensation and feeling** (*saññā vedayita nirodha*). One might remain in this state, if needed, for not more than one week. **When one awakens** from this state, however, one is able to witness how the mental process creates the “**world**,” and even the “**self**” quite unconsciously. This means, the “**world**” that we are aware of is a product of the unconscious process of perception and conception, and so is the “**self**” that we believe “exists in the world.” The “**world**” is perceived **as an objective experience**, and the “**self**” is perceived as a **subjective experience**. It is the **cognitive process** that creates the **objective “world,”** and it is the **affective process** that creates the **subjective “self.”** In other words, when one awakens from this state of **absolute stillness of mind**, one begins to become **consciously aware of the process** by which **perception and conception** takes place, culminating in the “**world**” and the “**self**” coming into being.

[Genesis Revealed by The Buddha](#)

Genesis revealed by the Buddha

Although critics imagine that the Buddha was ignorant of how the world has come into being, it is in this explanation called *paṭicca samuppāda* that he reveals how the world is created by each individual by oneself and for oneself. In short, we are living in a world of our own creation. Each one’s world is separate from that of others, although we think we live in an external world common to all, created by an external agent. All human beings are the creators of their own world. Each one creates one’s own world. The world they create is a similar world because of the similar structure of their body, and they are able to communicate with others through language and share their experience with others. The **result** of this unconscious process of creation of a **world** and a **self**, through the process of **cognition** and **affection**, is that it creates “**the problem of existence**,” which is the “**miserable insecurity of life**.”

Thus “**the problem of existence**,” comes into being, **depending on the necessary conditions**, following the **natural law of determinism**. This natural law is that every natural occurrence in the world is determined by the presence of the necessary conditions. It is the law on which all modern scientific technology is based. This law came to be known in the West only in the 18th century, when science began. Therefore people in the West call this period **the age of enlightenment**. They used this law to conquer nature and gratify their desire for comfort, convenience, security, and even to kill their enemies.

It was this same law, however, that was introduced to the world by the Buddha in India more than twenty five centuries earlier. He did not use this law to conquer objective external nature. He used this same law to transform the subjective mental nature and solve the problem of existence. He called this law **the Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paṭicca samuppāda*) described as: “When conditions are present it comes into being, but when conditions are absent it ceases to be” (*hetuṃ paṭicca saṅbhūtaṃ hetu bhavaṃ nirujjati*).

This **Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paṭicca samuppāda*) described by the Buddha is more than mere **determinism**, which points to the fact that things happen only due the presence of the necessary conditions. **Concurrence of Antecedents**, on the other hand, is also a description of how things come to be, including how the **world** as well as the self come to be based on a **series of antecedents**, which are **subjective mental processes**. This process brings about an awareness of a “**world**” and a “**self**.” This means, the world that we are aware of is the product of a subjective mental process rather than an independent existence of an objective reality. In existential terminology, it is an **existence** without an **essence**, where existence denotes **that it is**, and essence denotes **what it is**. In Kantian terminology, the world and self are **phenomena** without a **noumenon**. In still another way of speaking, the **world** and **self** are **appearances** and **not realities**.

Therefore what is called the **Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paṭicca samuppāda*) is a natural mental process by which the “world” and the “self” come into being, along with the “**miserable insecurity of life**.” This is a **series of logical antecedents** that **takes place simultaneously**, all at the same time. This is why it is called **The Concurrence of Antecedents**.

[The Cognitive and the Affective](#)

The Cognitive and the Affective

It is essential to understand that there are two main processes that constitute experience. They are, the Cognitive and the Affective. It is the Cognitive Process that perceives and conceives and so makes sense of the sensory experience. We become conscious of a “world” through the Cognitive Process. It is the Affective Process that becomes conscious of a

“self” and gets involved in an emotional relationship between the “self” and the “world,” resulting in the arising of **the great problem of existence**.

This **Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paṭicca samuppāda*) is a continuous mental process that goes on unconsciously, throughout our lives, producing a new “world” and a new “self” every moment. This continuous **dynamic** process of **change** gives rise to a **false sense** of permanent **static** existence. In other words, it is a continuous process of transformation (*nānattatā*) or **becoming**, and not a **static** existence or **being** (*bhava*). From birth to death, it is a process of **change** or **becoming**, and not a **static** presence or **being**.

The fact is that we erroneously think of ourselves as **static beings**, while we are also aware of our **birth, ageing, and impending death**. We spend our entire life making an effort to prevent, or at least **delay**, this **eventuality**, but **without success**. The obvious **solution** is to **realize** that we are **not blessed** with a **static existence**. Our existence is **only an appearance**, and not a **reality**. If **we do not really exist**, then **why worry** about this **inevitable death of a body** which is not “me?”

[The Ultimate Consequence](#)

The ultimate consequence

If the **gradual reduction of experience**, or the **cognitive ecstasy**, as described above is practiced seriously and conscientiously, it is possible for the meditator to become **at least a Non-returner** (*Anāgami*) if not a **Breaker of Bonds** (*Arahat*). In other words, if the meditation is **practiced as described** above, it is possible to **Awaken from the dream of existence**, and reach the state of **Awakening** (*sammā sambodhi*) as the Buddha did. Yet it is **also possible to Become Awakened without** going through this process of **Absolute Stopping of the Mind** (*saññā vedayita nirodha*). It is **to make things easier** that the Buddha pointed out the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**.

The individual who follows the Supernormal Eightfold Way, and is emancipated by Awakening at the fourth affective ecstasy (*jhāna*), is called a *ceto vimutti*. The individual who goes through the cognitive ecstasies, and absolutely stops the mind, and Awakens by observing the process of creation is called *paññā vimutti*. A person who Awakens in both ways is called the *ubhato bhāga vimutti*. The chief disciples of the Buddha, Sariputta and Moggallana, are among those who had gone through this “double awakening” (*ubhato bhāga vimutti*). We shall go into a discussion of this **natural law** in more detail subsequently.

[Our Regret](#)

Our regret

It is unfortunate that since the first century after the Buddha, the pure teachings of the Buddha were lost due to pollution by foreign concepts. Since then, the followers began to lay emphasis on “*kamma and rebirth*” rather than the **Fourfold Supernormal Reality** (*Cattāri Ariya Saccāni*). This degeneration of the teachings have been foretold by the Buddha himself when he said: “In the future my followers will begin to speak about my lower level teachings rather than my higher teachings like emptiness (*suññatā*).” This idea of emptiness was taken over by the Mahayanists but they were unable to fully comprehend the meaning of emptiness (*suññatā*). Two well-known thinkers attempted to explain *suññatā* but they differed. They were *Nagarjuna* the analyst and *Asangha* the idealist.

In the *Sabbāsava Sutta* in the Majjhima Nikaya the Buddha points out that if a person begins to think in terms of *kamma* and rebirth he will never be able to attain *Nibbāna* because by doing so he/she confirms the idea of “self” as (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*). The follower of the Buddha *Ariya Sāvaka*, on the other hand thinks only of suffering, its cause, its end, and the way to its end. This directs him straight to *Nibbāna*.

What appears today in the modern world as Buddhism: whether Theravada, Mahayana, Vajirayana, Pure-land, or Zen are adulterated forms of original Buddhism. The original Buddhism is not completely lost, however. It is available at least in written form in the Sutta Pitaka preserved by the Theravadins, though not fully comprehended by them. An intelligent person, who is educated in modern science, philosophy, and psychology, who studies the suttas in theory and practice, may be able to comprehend at least to a workable degree, the profound teachings of the Buddha.

Buddha = Dhamma = Paṭicca Samuppāda

The Buddha has often said: “He who sees me sees the *Dhamma*, and he who sees the *Dhamma* sees me.” As he has also said: “He who sees the *Dhamma* sees the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*,” and He who sees the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* sees the *Dhamma*,” We may therefore conclude that **he who sees the Buddha sees the Paṭicca Samuppāda and vice versa**. This

means, if we have never seen the **Buddha**, we could see the Buddha if we see the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*. This could be far better than looking at a golden image of the Buddha, or even one made of a precious stone or marble. What is great about the Buddha is not his body but his mind. *Paṭicca samuppada* represents his mind. What this means is that **the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* is the foundation on which the entire teaching of the Buddha and the Buddha himself stands.**

We are equipped today with the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* in the words of the Buddha, but few scholars have understood the real meaning of those words. Today there are many versions of the explanation. There is the traditional explanation of the Theravada Buddhists, as well as the traditional explanation of the Mahayana and the Vajirayana Buddhists. There is also a popular version given by a Western scholar Ñānawēera. There are other interpretations of scholars well known or unknown. Those who are interested could go into a comparative study of these different explanations of the words of the Buddha.

What we offer in this booklet, however, is only the explanation that we use in our meditation system which is meaningful to us. This is not something to be blindly believed in, but something the meditator will discover by oneself as one meditates.

It is important to note that *paṭicca samuppāda* or the **Concurrence of logical Antecedents** is a description of the experience of the Buddha after his **Awakening from the Dream of Existence** (*nirodha samāpatti*). It is also a description of **how the mental process creates the “world,” the “self,” and the Problem of Existence** (*bhava dukkha*).

It is not a description of how rebirth takes place, as the traditional commentators (*aṭṭvāchāriya*) make us believe. The tradition holds that our real problem is **rebirth** (*jāti*) but the Sutta Pitaka points out that the problem is **existence** (*bhava*). Nirvana has been described by the Buddha not as the **ending of rebirth** (*jāti nirodho*), but as the **ending of existence** (*bhava nirodho Nibbānaṅ*). This will be explained further in due course.

Concurrence of Logical Antecedents (Paṭicca Samuppāda)

Concurrence of Logical Antecedents (Paṭicca Samuppāda)

This **Concurrence of Logical Antecedents** is an extraordinary explanation of how the “world” and the “self” came into being through a simultaneously occurring series of subjective mental processes, which are logical antecedents. The **physical world** we are aware of is a **product** of a **mental process** going on within us. According to this explanation, we are constantly watching a moving cinema throughout our lives. All that we know is known through this cinematography, which is a subjective mental process of experiencing.

What we call an experience is a mental process of perception and conception that begins at the five sense bases and is carried to the brain as the sixth sense through nerve impulses. Though we call it a mental process it is really a physical activity. Experience as understood normally is of two kinds: 1) subjective experience and 2) objective experience. The world that we are aware of is normally understood to be an objective experience, and the mind we are aware of is a subjective experience. What the Buddha points out is that the objectively experienced world is really a subjective experience because the eye works like a camera. The picture is inside the camera and not outside. All that is experienced through the senses is inside and not outside.

This process of perception and conception is a series of antecedents, one coming after the other. An antecedent is an incident that comes before another incident. In speaking of “the concurrence of antecedents,” we are referring to a series of antecedents occurring at the same time. Of course then a question arises: “If it is a series of incidents one coming before the other, how can they occur at the same time?”

In order to answer this question, we have to point out that there are three kinds of antecedents: spatial, temporal, and logical.

(1) If we speak of a row of pillars that come one after another, that is a series of spatial antecedents.

(2) If we speak of the ringing of a bell where a series of sounds come one after another, that is a series of temporal antecedents.

(3) If we simply count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, we are referring to a series of logical antecedents. They are not in space or time. Logically 1 comes before 2, and 2 comes before 3, and so on.

This means when we speak of our “**concurrence of logical antecedents**,” we are really speaking of a **series of logical antecedents that occur at the same time**. This is why it is called the **concurrence of logical antecedents**.

DHAMMA, the teaching of the Buddha, is called *ākalika*, which means “not-temporal” because it is **independent of time and space**. *Dhamma* is **an explanation of how time and space come into being**. Therefore *Dhamma* is the foundation of time and space. **Time and space are dependent on the Dhamma**, not vice versa.

Dhamma really means “**experience**,” or even better, it is the **process** of experiencing. In more detail, experience is the perceptual and conceptual process of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking and feeling. The **concept** “existence” is a **product** of the process of experiencing, and therefore **experience precedes existence**. To **exist** is to occupy **space** and **time**. Therefore space and time are **products** of experience.

Experience is dichotomous. It is divided into two parts subjective and objective. The subjective part we tend to personalize as “mine” and the objective part is alienated as “other.” Personalization creates a personal “self” or personality, which is separate from the alienated external “world.” This dichotomy becomes the foundation for an emotional relationship between the subjective “self” and the objective “other.”

What we call matter is an objective experience. What we call mind is a subjective experience. What I call “I,” “me,” “mine,” or “self,” are subjective experiences. What I call world, matter, energy, people, animals, plants, or inanimate objects are objective experiences.

What we call the **concurrency of logical antecedents** is therefore nothing but an account of the process by which we experience the **objective world** and the **subjective self**. It is how the Buddha saw the genesis of the **common reality** perceived by mankind. It is the process of experiencing the “**world**” and the “**self**” and the resulting “**suffering**” (*Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkandassa samudayo hoti*). It also points the **way out** of suffering (*Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkandassa nirodo hoti*).

It also points out that the **world** we are aware of, as well as the “**self**” we are aware of is only a dream. We **can awaken** from this **dream**, and thereby both “**self**” and the “**world**” can **disappear**. What we experience **then** will be only the **experience – DHAMMA**. Therefore the Buddha said:

Non-manifest perception, limitless, and all clear
No solid, liquid, heat or motion is cognized
Not even a trace of an image or name met
When perception is stopped, all objects disappear

*Anidassana viññānaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabaṇ
Etta paṭhavi ca apo ca tejo vayo nagādati
Etta nāmaṃ ca rūpaṃ ca asesañ uparujjati
Viññāṇassa nirodena etta etaṃ uparujjati*

Once a *deva* (celestial being) visited the Buddha and asked a question. “If a person could travel in space at an extremely high speed, can he reach the end of the world?”

“No,” was the Buddha’s answer.

“Yet, without reaching the end of the world, one cannot bring suffering to an end,” continued the Buddha.

Then, he said further: “The world, the beginning of the world, the end of the world, and the way leading to the end of the world is in this fathom long body itself, along with its perceptions and conceptions (*saññimhi samānake*). In other words, this “**world**” and the “**self**” are **products** of the process of **perception** and **cognition**, which are activities of the body.

Immediately after his awakening, the Buddha is supposed to have said:

Innumerable lives, in saṅsāra, did I run
Seeking the builder of this painful existence
But never did I meet him, this terrible being
So painful is repeated birth and death.

O Creator now I see you
No more shall you create
Your structure is dismantled
Your foundation destroyed

My mind has stopped creating
The emotional urge is no more.

Comment: In other words his mind was the creator.

[Concurrence of Antecedents \(Paticca Samuppāda\)](#)

Concurrence of Antecedents (*Paṭicca Samuppāda*)

This **subjective mental process** described by the Buddha explains how the **world, self, and suffering** came into being through a series of **logical antecedents**. It is this description that is called the **Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paṭicca samuppāda*). This **Concurrence of Antecedents** is based on a natural law on which all natural events, both physical and mental, are based. This law is recognized today in the Western world as **Determinism**, which is the basis of all modern scientific technology. This law was recognized in the West only during the 18th Century, when science began. This period is today called the **Age of Enlightenment**. Before this period Western thought was governed by the **religious dogma** that every natural event occurred only due to the power of God, the supernatural Creator of the world. When this law of determinism was recognized educated people lost faith in the religious dogmas. As a result many revolutions took place such as the French revolution and the Marxist revolution.

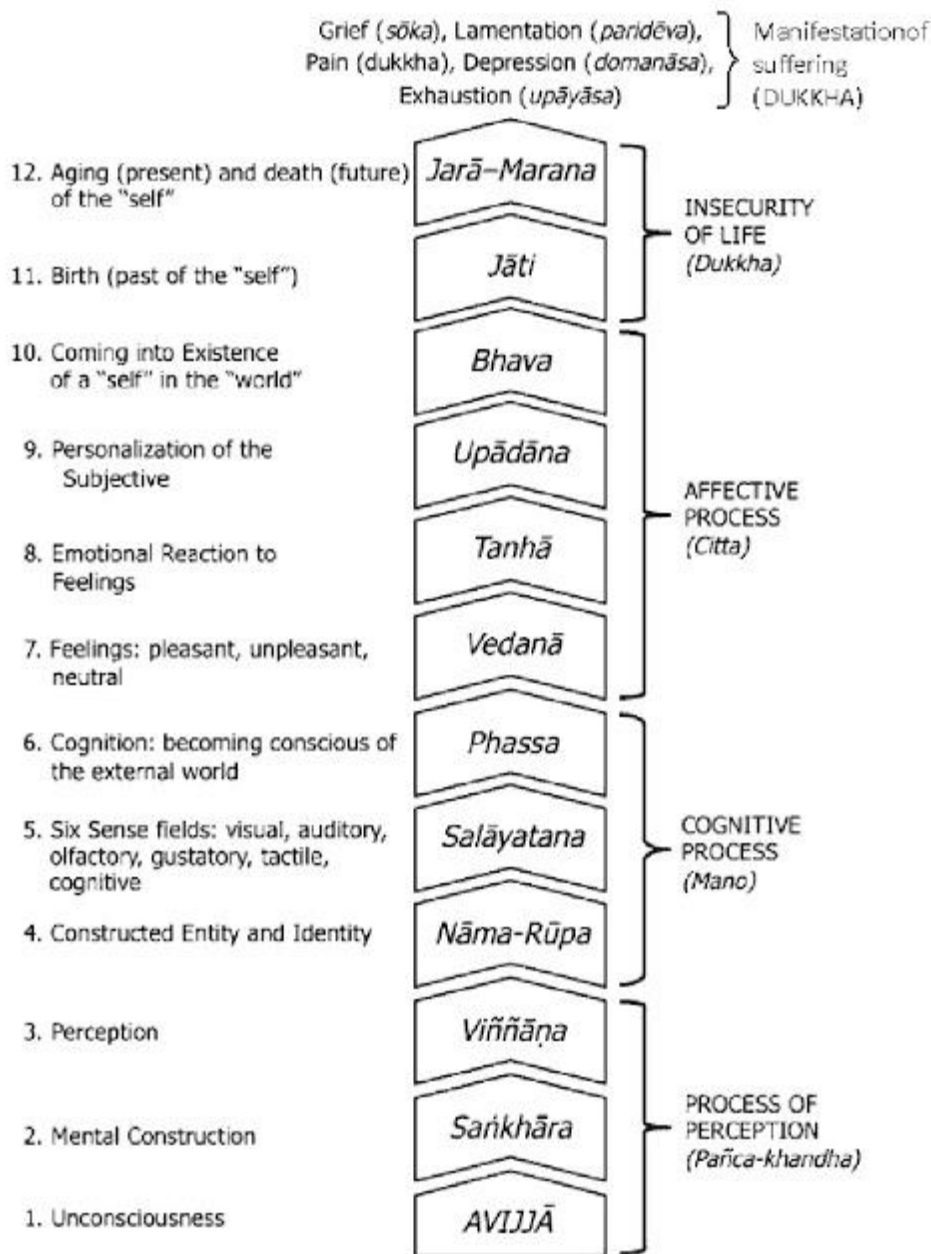
This law of Determinism was used in the West to conquer nature, and transform the natural environment to suit the needs of hungry humanity. In the East it was used by the Buddha to solve the **problem of existence**, by transforming the human mind, which was dominated by the affective faculty or emotions.

[The Buddhist Concept of Genesis](#)

The Buddhist Concept of Genesis

In discussing genesis, origin of the world, the Buddha was not referring to an objective physical world. He was referring to a subjective experience, which we call the objective world.

The words of the Buddha are stated as follows:



The problem of existence is **the insecurity of life** created by a **conflict between human reason** and **human emotion**. It is human reason that recognizes the **reality of external circumstances**, while human emotions being unaware of reality are blindly concerned about **human emotional needs**. It is this conflict that Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis pointed to as **neurosis**. It is also what the modern existential philosophers have referred to as, **fear and trembling**, or **anguish**. They have, however, been unable to find an adequate solution to this problem, other than to take the **leap of faith** as Kierkegaard did or **resort to Marxism** as Sartre did. It was the Buddha who solved the problem in the East, **not by changing** the external circumstances, but by changing the **mind** of man. He solved it by understanding that the **objective world** and the **subjective self**, are only a creation of the **process of perception and feeling**, and therefore **existence** that the **existentialists harped** on was not even a **rational concept** but was only an **emotional feeling** based on **imagination**.

This means, what we observe as the **world** and **self** are not **realities** but **appearances**. Both our **subjective** and the **objective** experiences are **really subjective**, and **therefore a delusion**. Even the conflict between **emotion** and **external circumstances** is really a conflict between **emotion** and **reason**. **Suffering** is understood to be based on the **delusion** or **dream of existence**. It is only by awakening from this dream of existence that the **problem is solved**.

Concurrence of Antecedents (*paṭicca samuppāda*) is a description of a process that begins with an unconscious state (*avijjā*). The modern theory of evolution confirms this idea when it states that life began as an unconscious electrochemical process that began as the process of evolution that ended in producing a human brain that became conscious of a world and a self. In other words, matter was not conscious till the human being evolved. This awakening into a world with a self is an opening into an awareness of **objective sensations** (*saññā*) and **subjective feelings** (*vedanā*).

Concurrence of Antecedents (*paṭicca samuppāda*) therefore consists of two sequential processes: the **cognitive** and the **affective**. It starts with the **Cognitive process** that begins with **construction** (*sankhāra*) and ends with **cognition** (*phassa*). This is followed by the **Affective process** that begins with **feeling** (*vedanā*) and ends with **ageing** and **death** (*jarā maraṇa*).

[The Process of Perception](#)

Concurrence of Logical Antecedents in more detail

The process of perception

1. **Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paṭicca samuppāda*), the process that **mistakenly creates an existence** of a **subject** and an object begins from a state of **Absolute Unconsciousness** (*Avijjā*).
2. From this state of **Absolute unconsciousness**, mental **Construction** (*Sankhāra*) begins.
3. The building materials used for construction are the **subjective feelings** (*Vedanā*) and the **objective sensations** (*Saññā*).
4. **Objective Sensations** (*Saññā*) become the building material for the **Cognitive Process** that builds the **world**.
5. **Subjective Feelings** (*Vedanā*) become the building material for the **Affective Process** that builds the **self**.
6. First arises the **cognitive process of construction**, which is **Perception** (*Viññāṇa*), the rudimentary awareness that distinguishes between one object and another.
7. When perception is completed, the five constituents of perception comes into being:
 - a) Mental Image (*rūpa*)
 - b) Feeling (*vedanā*)
 - c) Sensation (*saññā*)
 - d) Construction (*sankhāra*)
 - e) Perception (*viññāṇa*).

The continuation of these constitutes of perception is not a static existence of an entity but the continuity of a process of activity that continues without end like the continuity of a flame that is dependent on the necessary conditions. This activity can stop only when the necessary conditions are absent.

Concurrence of Logical Antecedents in more detail
[Perception Develops Into Cognition \(phassa\)](#)

Concurrence of Logical Antecedents in more detail

Perception develops into Cognition (phassa)

8. What is perceived through the **five senses** (*pañca indriya*) is brought to the thinking brain or **cerebral cortex** (*mano*), which uses rational thought and memory to give meaning to what was perceived. This way a **percept** (*viññāṇa*) is transformed into a **concept** (*dhamma*). Through this process of conception an **entity** in the form of an **image** (*rūpa*) is created with an **identity** in the form of a **name** (*nāma*). This way a world made of **Six Sensual Realms** (*saḷāyatana*): of **vision, sound, smell, taste, touch, and concepts** (*dhamma*) comes into being.
9. With the coming of the world of Sensual Realms, cognition (*phassa*) is completed and a **world consciousness** arises.

10. Cognition (*phassa*) is completed by **being Conscious** of an **external world**.

Concurrence of Logical Antecedents in more detail

[Beginning of the Affective Process \(citta\)](#)

Concurrence of Logical Antecedents in more detail

Beginning of the Affective Process (citta)

11. Once the consciousness of the **world of six realms** occurs due to the completion of the process of Cognition, an **emotional reaction** starts, in relation to perceived **feelings** (*vedanā*).

12. This **emotional reaction** brings about a **dichotomy** of the experience into: a **subjective** and an **objective**.

13. Then the **subjective experience** is **personalized** as “**mine**” and the **objective experience** is **alienated** as “**not mine**,” or “other.”

14. This **personalization** of the subjective process results in the **notion of “I”** and the **notion of a “self”** (*etan mama, eso hamasmi, eso me attati*).

15. Once the “**self**” has come into being through **personalization** (*upādāna*), that “**self**” is only a **feeling**, and not a visible object.

16. Then the **question** arises: **what is the object** that can be referred to as the “**self**”? The answer naturally obtained is the **Body**, because only the **body** is seen to occupy **space** and **time**.

17. The body then becomes the “**self**” (*sakkāya ditṭhi*). Even others begin to refer to the body, as “**my self**,” and so do “I.”

18. If the **body** that exists in space and time is “**my self**,” then this **body**, that occupies time, has a **past**, **present**, and future, which means “**I** have a **past present and future**.”

19. That means, the **past of the body** becomes **my past**, which is **birth** (*jāti*). The **future of the body** becomes **my future**, which is **death** (*maraṇa*). The **present of the body** becomes **my present**, which is **ageing** (*jarā*).

20. This means, **by making the body “my self,”** I have **become subject** to **birth, ageing and death**. Along with this **identification with the body** comes **grief** (*soka*), **lamentation** (*parideva*), **pain** (*dukkha*), **distress** (*domanassa*), and **exhaustion** (*upāyāsa*).

21. If the **body** was **not “my self,”** there would be **no birth, ageing, and death** for me; **no grief, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair**.

Concurrence of Logical Antecedents in more detail

[How Did The Body Become My Self \(sakkāya ditṭhi\)?](#)

How did the body become my self (sakkāya ditṭhi)?

22. The **body** became “**my self**” because I identified the **body** as “**my self**.”

23. I identified the **body** as “my self” because there was **no object** to identify as “my self,” other than the “feeling of self.”

24. The “**feeling of self**” was the **result of personalization** of the **emotional reaction**.

25. It was only the **subjective experience** of perception and emotion that I **personalized**, not the **body**.

26. This **personalization** as “**mine**” lead to a “**feeling of self**,” which needed an identity as an **object**.

27. The only object I found as **identity** was the **body**, but this body that I refer to is only a **collection of mental images**.

28. I not only see a collection of **mental images** as the **body** and “**self**,” I also **feel a sensation** as the **body** and “**self**.”

- (1) Although **the body** is **seen** as an **objective experience**.
- (2) The **body** is **felt** as a **subjective experience**.
- (3) It is the **feeling** of “self” that makes me **feel** the presence of “**my self**.”

29. The **image** that I am aware of as the **body** or “**self**” is **constructed** using **feelings**, and **sensations**. In other words what we call the body is only a **mental construct** created by the **process of perception**.

30. My “**self**” or “**personality**” therefore is the **result of personalizing** the **subjective experience of perception**, represented in the form of the **five constituents** of the **process of perception**.

31. Therefore in short, suffering is not the suffering of a true “self” but the suffering of **five constituents of perception** (body, feelings, sensations, construction, and perception) that are mistakenly personalized as “self” (*sankhitthena pañca upādānakkhandhā dukkhā*).

Foundation Foundation

The comprehension of **the Concurrence of Logical Antecedents** results in the recognition of the fundamentals. This recognition brings about the **paradigm shift** from existence to experience. This means **Experience is all that we can talk about**. All other things originate from experience. Experience is the foundation of all. (*Sabba Sutta – Samyutta Nikaya*). Therefore the most fundamental.

People normally think: the world existed first and then I came into being. Then “**I** met the ‘**world**,’ and I saw the **world**.” People also think wrongly that after death the world will continue while I have disappeared.

The fact, however, is: **seeing arises first** and it is only **from the seeing** (or perception) that the ‘**I**’ and the ‘**world**’ come into being. This was why the Buddha said: “In the seeing, there is only the **seeing** (*Diṭṭhe diṭṭha mattaṃ bhavissati*), there is neither the **seer** nor the **seen**. In other words there is only the experience of seeing. The subject and object are products of the experience. In other words, **experience precedes existence**. Existence does not come before experience as it is commonly thought. Existence is only a product of the process of perception, which is experience. Experience produces the subject and the object that are supposed to exist. It is this experience that the Buddha analysed into the **five constituents of the process of perception** (*pañcakkhandha*), which when personalized becomes the **five personalized constituents of personalization**. It is this personalization that produces the personality or self. This personality stands out in the form of the body and its properties.

Modern Scientific Research

Modern scientific research

Modern research on the brain has indicated that this process called experience is the activity of a part of the brain called the cerebral cortex that does the thinking. The brain of course is a part of the body. Therefore it is the body that does the thinking and not the mind. The term “mind” refers only to three activities of the body: **thinking, feeling and perception**. Thinking and feeling are technically called cognition and affection. The Buddha had three terms for these activities: perception (*viññāna*), cognition (*mano*) and affection (*citta*).

It is with cognition (*mano*) that we make meaning out of what we perceive. Perception is only the reaction of the organism to stimulation by the environment. We are organisms in an environment. We have five senses that can be stimulated by the environment. The organism reacts to this stimulus and so perception takes place. What is perceived is brought to the brain by nerves and the cerebral cortex gives meaning to what is perceived. This giving meaning to what is perceived is called cognition. According to the meaning given by cognition an emotion is aroused. This arousal of emotion is called affection. The emotion aroused is expressed in action. This action is called karma (in Sanskrit), or kamma (in Pali). The action may be to obtain what we desire, to get rid of what we hate, or run away from what we fear.

This arousal of emotion is what is called **stress** today. Stress is a disturbance of the body and mind, if continued too long it can be damaging not only to the body and mind but also to others around and society in general. All crimes in the world, all wars, murders, and every problematic human disturbance is a result of emotions. These emotions are blind and

unconsciously carried out but dependent on the necessary conditions.

[Importance of Cognition](#)

Importance of Cognition

It is only the cognitive faculty that is sensible. It is the cognitive faculty that should dominate our mind, and not the emotions, but very often it is the emotional or affective faculty that dominates our mind. This is what makes a human being an animal. What is special about the human being is the cognitive faculty. The glorious aim of the Buddha was to make the normal half human being a supernormal fully human being.

Feeding, sleeping, fear and sex
Is common to both man and beast
Cognition does make man very special
When low in cognition man is a beast
Āhara nidra bhaya maitunanca
Samanya me tad pasubih narānām
Dharmohi tesa madiko viseso
Dharmena hinah pasubih narānām

[The Role of Meditation](#)

The role of Meditation

This illustrates the grave need of man to practice meditation. What meditation does is to make the cognitive faculty of man dominate his mind rather than the affective. This involves a change in the way we think, so that the emotions will stop dominating our mind.

The importance of changing our thinking to stop the unconscious and irrational emotional behaviour has been recognized only recently in Western psychology. This fact was fully understood and used by the Buddha to transform personality by radically eliminating all self-centered emotions. This was the meaning of becoming a spiritually Awakened Buddha or an emancipated Arahāt.

It is in the sermon called the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* that the Buddha explains the difference between the thinking of the emancipated individual and the normal person. In other words, this explains the meaning of the paradigm shift from existence to experience (*nirodha samāpatti*).

[The Buddha's Elucidation of the Fundamentals](#)

The Buddha's elucidation of the Fundamentals

The Buddha says in his Discourse on Fundamentals (*Mūlapariyāya Sutta*):

(1) The ordinary human being perceives a solid as a solid (*paṭhavim paṭhavito sanjānati*).

(2) The Emancipated One (*Arahāt*) **apperceives** a solid as a solid (*paṭhavim paṭhavito abhijānāti*).

(1) The ordinary human being having perceived the solid comes to the conclusion the solid exists (*paṭhavim paṭhavito saññatva paṭhavim maññati*).

(2) The *Arahāt* having **apperceived** the solid does not come to the conclusion the solid exists (*paṭhavim paṭhavito abhiññatva paṭhavim namaññati*).

This difference in conception between the ordinary person and the *Arahat* is similar to the difference between the bird and the human being in front of a mirror, as described earlier.

[Existence and Essence](#)

Existence and Essence

The *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* goes further:

- (1) The ordinary person concludes that the solid exists and also of what it is made (*paṭhavito maññati paṭhaviyā maññati*).
- (2) The *Arahat* does not conclude that it exists or of what it is made (*paṭhavito namaññati paṭhaviyā namaññati*).

It is useful to compare this statement with the statement of existential philosophers who distinguish between existence and essence. Existence is expressed by the statement, “that it is” and the essence expressed by the statement, “what it is.” For example, if there is a cup made of clay its existence is expressed by the statement, “there is a cup.” Its essence is expressed by the statement, “it is made of clay.” This is how Jean-Paul Sartre made the statement, “existence precedes essence,” for something must exist before we can talk of what it is made. Sartre considered this to be the essential premise on which existential philosophy stands.

[Experience Precedes Existence](#)

Experience precedes Existence

From the Buddhist perspective, however, “experience precedes existence.” This is because **existence** is a concept that arose from experience, which is the mental process of perception. In other words, our paradigm has shifted from existential thinking to experiential thinking. Existential philosophers drew attention to the problem of existence, which is that every human being is aware of his own existence and also aware of his own death, which brings about anguish: anxiety, worry, fear and trembling. The existential philosophers could not, however, solve the problem other than to take the leap of faith in God, or wait till human intelligence grows or evolves to a capable level. It was the Buddha who offered the ultimate solution through a paradigm shift. **According to the Buddha, the problem was created by existential thinking. Therefore it can be solved only through a paradigm shift from existential thinking to experiential thinking.** This is why **existence** (*bhava*), according to the Buddha, is a **delusion**, or a **dream**, from which **mankind must Awaken** by switching on to experiential thinking. Entering into experiential thinking is what is called *nirodha samāpatti*.

[Error of Personalization](#)

Error of Personalization

The *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* goes further:

- (1) The ordinary person personalizes the solid as “mine” (*paṭhaviṃ meti maññati*).
- (2) The *Arahat* does not personalize the solid as “mine” (*paṭhaviṃ meti namaññati*).
- (1) The ordinary person takes delight in the solid (*paṭhaviṃ abhinandati*).
- (2) The *Arahat* does not take delight in the solid (*paṭhaviṃ na abhinandati*).
- (1) Referring to the ordinary person the Buddha asks, “why does he do so?” (*tankissa hetu*). And answers, “because he does not comprehend” (*apariññattassati*).

(2) Referring to the Arahant the Buddha asks, “why does he do so?” (*tankissa hetu*). And answers, “because he comprehends” (*pariññattassati*).

This is the essence of the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta*, which discusses the differences between the ordinary person and the Awakened One (*Arahant*) in relation to everything experienced, including *Nibbāna*.

The paradigm shift (*nirodha samāpatti*) where the meditator withdraws from the paradigm of existence (*bhava*) and gets established in the paradigm of experience (*nirodha*), brings about the freedom or liberation (*vimutti*) from emotional excitements (*tanhā*) and accompanying suffering (*dukkha*), ending in the imperturbable serenity, *Nibbāna*. This means the mind that was purified will never become polluted again.

[The Uninterrupted Samādhi](#)

The uninterrupted Samādhi

To come out of *samādhi* is to pollute the mind. He/ she can move from one level of *samādhi* to another, but he/ she has to remain at least in the first *jhāna*. In the first *jhāna*, it is possible to think and reason out and even discuss the *Dhamma*, but not be engaged in emotional thoughts. This fact is indicated in the fifth verse in the *Ratana Sutta*: “The Buddha has greatly extolled the uninterrupted *Samādhi*, which is equal to no other” (*yambuddhasetto parivannayi suciṅsamādhimanantarikaññamahu samādhina tena samona vijjatthi...*).

When we say that the emancipator can never be out of *samādhi*, a question may arise: “Does it mean that the emancipator is always in the experiential mode?” The answer is “no.”

Although the attention is withdrawn from the existential paradigm during the paradigm shift (*Nirodhasamāpatti*), it does not mean that the paradigm of existence is given up forever. When it becomes necessary to communicate with ordinary people, the Awakened One returns to the existential paradigm for that purpose, and goes back again to the experiential paradigm. These two modes can be changed from time to time, and are seen as two kinds of *Nibbāna*:

[Two Kinds of Nibbāna](#)

Two kinds of Nibbāna

(1) *Saupādisesa Nibbāna* – experienced when the Arahant is in the existential mode.

(2) *Anupādisesa Nibbāna* – experienced when the Arahant is in the experiential mode.

Although this is so, today the Theravada tradition explains these two kinds of *Nibbāna* in a different way. They explain it as follows:

(1) *Saupādisesa Nibbāna* – experienced when the Arahant is alive.

(2) *Anupādisesa Nibbāna* – experienced after the death of the Arahant.

This point is clarified in a *Nibbānadhātu sutta* #44 in the *Itivuttaka*:

Monks, there are two modes of *Nibbāna* (*Dve'me bhikkhave nibbāna dhātuyo*).

What are the two? (*Katamā dve*).

The personal mode, and the impersonal mode (*saupādisesa ca anupādisesa ca nibbāna dhātu*).

What monks is the personal mode of *Nibbāna*? (*Katamā ca bhikkhave saupādisesā nibbāna dhātu*). In this case monks, a monk is an emancipator, free of influences, has actualized the potential, accomplished the task, laid down the burden, realized the ideal, broken the bonds to being, liberated through tranquility and insight (*Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu arahaṇ hoti, khīnāsavo, vusitavā, katakaraṇīyo, ohitabhāro, anuppattasadattho, parikkhina bhavasaññojano, sammadañña vimutti*).

While in this mode, the five senses are active, and able to experience the pleasant and unpleasant sensations, and therefore

experiences pleasure and pain (*Tassa tiṭṭhanteva pañcendriyāni, yesa avighātattā, manāpa amanāpa paccanubhoti, sukkhadukkhaṇ paṭisaṇvedeti*).

Yet he is free from lust, hate, and delusion (*Tassa yo rāgakkhayo, dosakkhayo, mohakkhayo*).

This, monks, is the personal mode of *Nibbāna* (*Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave saupādisesa nibbāna dhātu*).

What, monks, is the impersonal mode of *Nibbāna*? (*Katamā ca bhikkhave anupādisesa nibbānadhātu*).

In this case monks, a monk is an emancipator, free of influences, has actualized the potential, accomplished the task, laid down the burden, realized the ideal, broken the bonds to being, liberated through tranquility and insight (*Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu arahaṇ hoti khīnāsavovusitavā katakaraṇiyo ohitabhāro anuppattasadattho parikkhinabhavasaññojano sammadaññā vumutto*).

In this very life, monks, he remains **experiencing no sensations, insentient** (*Tassaidheva bhikkhave sabbavedayitāni anabhinanditāni sīti bhavissanti*).

This monks is the impersonal mode of *Nibbāna* (*Ayaṇ vuccati bhikkhave anupādisesā nibbānadhātu*).

These two did the seer expound ("*Dve imā cakkhumatā pakāsitā*).

The unconditioned state of *Nibbāna* (*Nibbānadhātu anissitena tādina*).

One is the state to be experienced here and now (*Ekā hi dhātu idha diṭṭhadhammikā*).

With personality but existence ceased (*Saupādisesā bhavanettisankhayā*).

Other without personality and without existence (*Anupādisesā pana samparāyikā*).

Where existence of every kind ceases (*Yamhi nirujjhanti bhavāni sabbaso*).

The experience of apperception without construction (*Ye etadaññāya padaṇ asankhataṇ*).

The emancipated mind has ceased to exist (*Vimuttacittā bhavanettisankhayā*).

Has realized the embodiment of *Dhamma* (*te dhammasārādhigamā khaye ratā*).

Brought all states of existence to an end (*Pahaṇsu te sabbabhavāni tādino 'ti*).

Thus did the Lord proclaim (*Ayampi thovutto bhagavatā*).

This means *Anupādisesa Nibbāna* is not the experience of the *Arahat* after death of the physical body but the *Nirodha Samāpatti*.

[What is Truth?](#)

What is Truth?

Being in these two modes breaks up the idea of truth into existential truth (*sammuti sacca*) and experiential truth (*paramattha sacca*). This means there is no such thing as an absolute truth. To hold one idea as truth is to become narrow minded, and to ignore the validity of its opposite. This fact is expressed by the Buddha in the analogy of the elephant and the blind men. The Buddha points out this fact also in the *Cula-viyuha Sutta*, in the *Sutta Nīpatha*, in verse form as follows:

If truth is one, and no second exists
 Debates will never arise among folk
 A variety of truths they themselves do form
 Gurus therefore never speak of one truth

*Ekam hi saccam na dutiyamatthi
 Yasmim pajā no vivade pajānam,
 Nānā te saccāni sayam thunanti
 Tasmā na ekam samanā vadanti*

Never was there a variety of truths
 Other than sensations always in the world
 Creating views using speculative logic
 They speak of a duality: falsehood and truth

Na heva saccāni bahuni nānā
 Aññātra saññāya niccāni loke,
 Takkañca diṭṭhisu kapappayitvā
 Saccam musāti dvayadhammāhu

In the *Alagaddupama Sutta* the Buddha points out that the Four-fold Supernormal Reality (*cattāri ariya saccāni*) is only a solution to a problem, and not a truth to be believed. It is compared to a boat used to cross over the river. It is not to be carried away after crossing the river, but left behind for others to use. Therefore the Four-fold Supernormal Reality (*cattāri ariya saccāni*) is not a dogma to be believed on blind faith, but only a solution to a problem, which can be used by anyone to solve one's problem. The Buddha takes a pragmatic point of view regarding truth.

About The Four-fold Supernormal Reality, the Buddha states:

- (1) **The first truth** is not to be believed, but **to be comprehended** (*pariññeyyam*).
- (2) **The second truth** is not to be believed, but **to be eliminated** (*pahātabbam*).
- (3) **The third truth** is not to be believed, but **to be realized** (*sacchikātabbam*).
- (4) **The fourth truth** is not to be believed, but **to be cultivated** (*bhāvetabbam*).

Insecurity of Life

The First Reality :

The problem of existence

Insecurity of life

Out of all the animals in the world it is the human animal that is aware of its own existence and also aware of its unpredictable but certain impending death. Anyone's entire life is devoted to a futile struggle to avoid this unavoidable death. Everyone celebrates births and laments and moans about death. They fail to realize that birth and death are the two ends of the same continuum called life. They live their lives as if they were going to live forever. Death is certain and life is uncertain. This is the insecurity of life.

From the time a baby is born it is suffering, this is why the baby cries. The baby soon begins to realize the insecurity and weakness of life and hopes to be secure and strong when grown up. After growing up one begins to realize that the insecurity becomes even worse.

As an adult one struggles to make ends meet, all one's life, till ageing and sickness set in. Things get even worse then. The struggle to survive continues till death.

The first reality that the Buddha pointed to was this insecurity of life. Life is insecure because of the impending, unpredictable death that can come to any individual young or old at any age, at any time. This insecurity is seen very clearly when we look at the animal world. Each animal lives by making other animals their food. Even the herbivorous animals eat living plants. Human beings do the same not only in eating but even in the normal ways of earning a living by competition and exploitation. If the nature of life is this, there is sufficient room to question the common belief that a loving God was the Creator of this life.

Even modern existential philosophers have pointed to this **insecurity of life** that brings about anxiety, worry, fear, and all the kinds of anguish. All religions that hope to receive eternal life and eternal happiness in Heaven after death are ultimately attempting to solve this same problem of existence.

This pursuit of Heaven, which can be verified only after death, is based on the assumption that death is the opposite of life and not a part of life. Some have pointed out, however, that birth and death are merely the two ends of the same stick called life. This means death is a part of life and not the opposite of life.

Mankind has from the beginning of history made an effort to remain alive without dying, despite the obvious fact of death. This struggle to exist was an impossible struggle. It was not only futile, it was also painful, and it was also based on the **delusion of eternal existence**.

[Elisabeth Kübler-Ross: *Death and Dying*](#)

The First Reality :

The problem of existence

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross: *Death and Dying*

Another attempt to escape from this ever impending death and **insecurity of life** is to forget about death, and to devote one's life to enjoying the pleasures of life. We even think that it is pessimistic to think of death. We try to hide from the fact of death in many ways, and attempt to carry on life, enjoying the pleasures of the senses. Some people do not like to keep a dead body in their home. They keep it in a special place hidden from the public. They even try to prevent children from looking at a dead body. They also try to stop children speak about death. It is only recently that people have begun to speak about death, or even write books on death. It was quite recently that Elisabeth Kübler-Ross wrote her book on *Death and Dying*, where she describes five stages of grief:

1. **Denial** — Because of the difficulty in facing a loss, the first reaction is Denial. The person tries to shut out the reality or magnitude of the situation, and develops a false reality that is preferable.

2. **Anger** — “Why me? It's not fair!”; “How can this happen to me?”; “Who is to blame? At the second stage, the individual recognizes that denial cannot continue, and therefore becomes angry. Misplaced feelings of rage appear. Anger can manifest itself in different ways such as: anger with themselves, with others, and especially with close ones. It is important to remain nonjudgmental when dealing with such a person.

3. **Bargaining** — "I'll do anything for a few more years..." or "I will give my life savings if..."

At the third stage a hope arises that the individual can somehow undo or avoid the cause of grief. Psychologically, the individual is saying, "I understand I will die, but if I could just do something to buy more time..." People facing a less serious trauma can bargain. For example: "Can we still be friends?" when facing a break-up. Bargaining rarely provides a sustainable solution, especially if it is a matter of life or death.

4. **Depression** — During the fourth stage, the grieving person begins to understand the certainty of death. "I'm so sad, why bother with anything?"; "I'm going to die soon so what's the point?"; Because of this, the individual may become silent, refuse visitors and spend much of the time crying and being sullen and gloomy. This process allows the grieving person to disconnect from things of love and affection, possibly in an attempt to avoid further trauma. It is a kind of acceptance with emotional attachment. It is natural to feel sadness, regret, fear, and uncertainty when going through this stage. Feeling those emotions shows that the person has begun to accept the situation. Often times, this is the ideal path to take, to find closure and make their way to the fifth step, Acceptance.

5. **Acceptance** —In this last stage, individuals begin to come to terms with their mortality or inevitable future. "It's going to be okay." "I can't fight it, I may as well prepare for it." This stage varies according to the person's situation. This typically comes with a calm, retrospective view for the individual, and a stable mindset.

Kübler-Ross originally developed this model based on her observations of people suffering from terminal illnesses.

She later expanded her theory to apply to any form of catastrophic personal loss, such as the death of a loved one, the loss of a job or income, major rejection, the end of a relationship or divorce, drug addiction, incarceration, the onset of a disease or chronic illness, an infertility diagnosis, as well as many tragedies and disasters (and even minor losses).

Supporting her theory, many (both sufferers and therapists) have reported the usefulness of the Kübler-Ross Model in a wide variety of situations where people were experiencing a significant loss. The application of the theory is intended to

help the sufferer to fully resolve each stage, then help them transit to the next – at the appropriate time – rather than getting stuck in a particular phase or continually bouncing around from one unresolved phase to another.

[Hans Selye: General Adaptation Syndrome](#)

The First Reality :

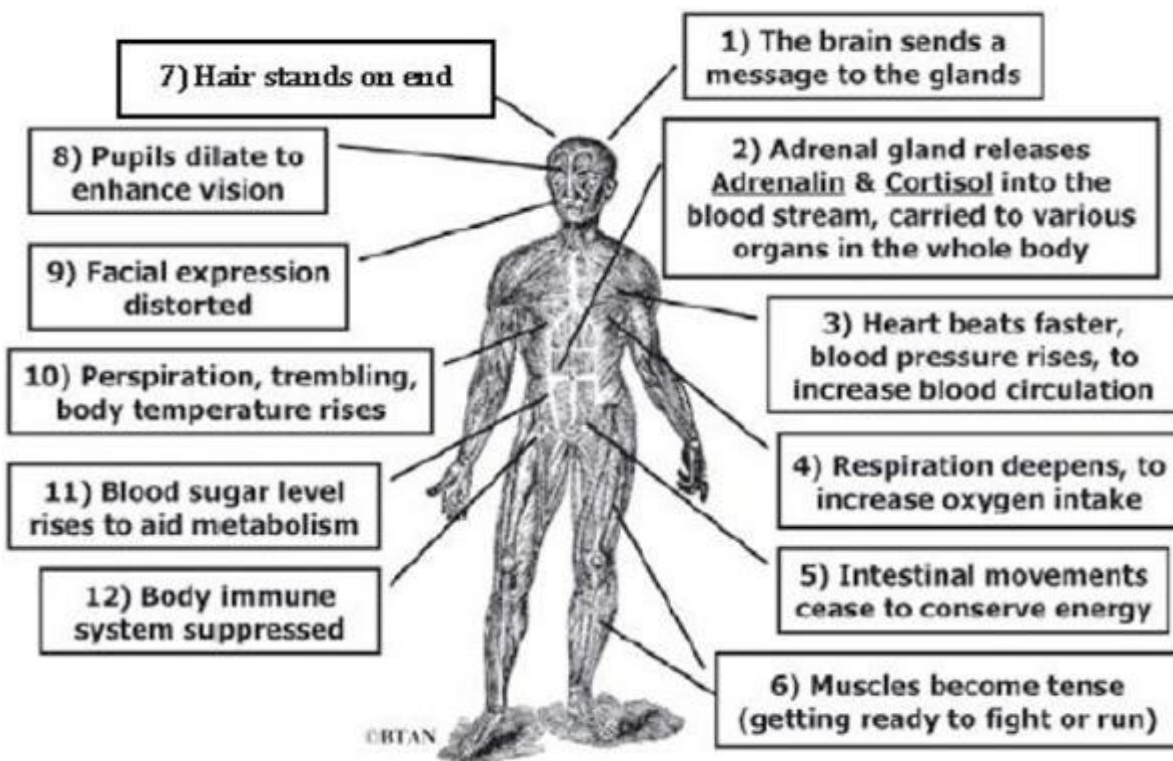
The problem of existence

Hans Selye: General Adaptation Syndrome

It was also quite recently that Hans Selye began to write about stress and stress management. The **stress** of life was presented by Hans Selye as the **General Adaptation Syndrome**, which consisted of three stages:

- (1) Alarm reaction = Grief (*sōka*),
Lamentation (*paridēva*)
- (2) Stage of resistance = Pain (*dukkha*),
Distress (*domanassa*)
- (3) Stage of exhaustion = Exhaustion (*upāyāsa*)

It is wonderful to note that the Buddha described the same stages in the **General Adaptation Syndrome** in the form of **grief** (*sōka*), **lamentation** (*paridēva*), **pain** (*dukkha*), **distress** (*domanassa*), and **exhaustion** (*upāyāsa*).



Stress is understood today as a complete disturbance of the body as well as mind where the body begins to change behaviour from normal to an abnormal state, which if continued too long makes the body sick leading ultimately even to death. This disturbance goes through the three stages as indicated above.

[Buddha's Philosophy: Emotional Reaction & Insecurity of Life](#)

The First Reality :

The problem of existence

Buddha's Philosophy: Emotional Reaction and Insecurity of Life

The Buddha explains the three ways in which this emotional reaction occurs:

Sense of Self & Emotion

If suffering was the **sense of self** produced by **personalization** of the **impersonal emotional reaction** together with the **cognitive process of perception**, the **blind emotions** that personalize the impersonal processes **are the cause of suffering**.

Therefore it becomes easy to recognize that the root of suffering is the **emotion**. This emotion is the cause of suffering pointed out by the Buddha. The common translation of the Pali term *tanhā* as **craving** does not convey this meaning. This is why we translate *tanhā* as **emotion**.

Emotion is the **reaction of the organism to feelings** that are pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. It is when the environment **stimulates the senses that** these feelings arise. The data received through the five senses are carried to the **brain where thinking occurs**, resulting in the **interpretation** of circumstances. This interpretation results in the **arousal of emotions**. The emotions aroused depend on the interpretation. This interpretation creates a **subjective “self”** and an **objective “other,”** and an **emotional relationship** occurs between the “self” and the “other.” This emotional relationship creates an **emotional bond of existence** in relationship. This starts the **struggle to keep on existing forever**, quite **ignorant of the futility and painfulness** of the struggle. This **blind desire** for existence **clashes** with the **reality of non-existence**, resulting in **suffering**.

[Struggle for Existence](#)

The Second Reality :

The cause of suffering, which is to be eliminated

Struggle for existence

It is the **blind struggle for existence** (*bhava-tanhā*) that is the cause of suffering. **Only a struggle continues** but there is no real existence. What exists is only an **emotional delusion of existence**.

Blind Emotions (*tanhā*) are of three types:

- (1) Desire for pleasant sensations (*lobha*) – (*kāma-tanhā*)
- (2) Hatred of unpleasant sensations (*dosa*) – (*vibhava-tanhā*)
- (3) The notion of existence of neutral sensations (*moha*) – (*bhava-tanhā*).

The emotional reaction **dichotomizes** the experience into two distinct parts: the **subjective** and the **objective**. The subjective is **personalized as “mine,”** the **objective** is **alienated** and regarded as part of an **external world**. The subjective is personalized as “This is **mine**, this is **me**, this is **I**, and this is **myself**” (*etam mama, eso'hamasmī, eso me attāti*). This brings about the concept “**I**,” that **becomes** the “**self**.” But this “self” has to be an **existing entity**. Then the question arises, “**what entity** do we refer to as the “**I**” or “**self**?” Then it is the **body that occupies space and time** that is identified as the “**self**.” It is also the **body that perceives an object**, and reacts emotionally to it. The **body** then becomes the “**self**” (*sakkāya-dīṭṭhi*). It is the **body** that other people can see as “**me**,” and call my **name**, and even take the **photograph as the image of “me”**.

To personalize the body is to personalize the cognitive and affective processes, which begins quite unconsciously and this begins the **suffering** and **insecurity of life**. In short, the personalization of the process of perception is suffering (*sankhittena pañcupādānakhandhādukkha*).

When the **body** has become the “**self**,” the “self” (*atta*) **occupies space and time** and **exists**. If it occupies time it has a **past, present, and future**.

Then the **past** of the body is the **birth** (*jāti*) of the body, the **future** of the body is the **death** (*maraṇa*) of the body, and the **present** of the body is **ageing** (*jarā*) of the body. This means “**I**” am **born, age, and die**. In other words, when I come into **existence**, I **suffer**. I **suffer** because I come into **existence**. In other words, to **exist** is to **suffer**.

When **I realize**, however, that **I do not really exist** all **suffering comes to an end**.

[Antecedental Concurrence](#)

The Third Reality :

Realization of the end of suffering

Antecedental Concurrence

If suffering **began unconsciously**, it can **end** only by **becoming conscious** of the process of cognition and affection. That is by **becoming conscious of the Antecedental Concurrence** (*paṭicca samuppāda*). The **process of cognition and affection creates the “world” and the “self.”** This “world” and the “self” are **unstable**. What is unstable is insecure. What is **insecure** is not as I want. What is not as I want is **not under my power**. What is **not under my power** is **not mine**. What is **not mine** cannot be **me**. What cannot be **me** cannot be my **self**. “What is **not mine**, is **not me, not my self**” (*netam mama, neso’hamasmi, neso me attāti*). What is not mine **should be discarded**.

This realization brings about the paradigm shift from existence to experience, which results in **dispassion**. Dispassion results in **emancipation** or **freedom from suffering** (*vimutti*). This results in the **imperturbable serenity of mind** (*Nibbāna*).

[Awakening from the Dream of Existence](#)

The Third Reality :
Realization of the end of suffering

Awakening from the Dream of Existence

When the cognitive and affective processes are fully comprehended and the paradigm shift has occurred both intellectually as well as emotionally, **suffering comes to an end**.

This is **eradication** of the **delusion of self**, or **Awakening** from the **Dream of Existence**.

This means, the **emotional reaction** was the cause of suffering. The way to end suffering was the **removal of the cause**. The way to **remove** the **emotional reaction** was to **change** the **way we interpret our circumstances**. How do we change this **cognitive interpretation of circumstances**? It is to change from **existential thinking** to **experiential thinking**. **Existential thinking** carries a **subjective “I”** and an **objective “other”** resulting in an **emotional relationship** between the “I” and the “other,” ending in **suffering**. The **solution** is a **paradigm shift** from **existential thinking** to **experiential thinking**. **Experiential thinking** is to **realize** that there is **no real subject** or **object** but only an **impersonal experience**.

[The Medial Path](#)

The Fourth Reality :
Developing the Supernormal Eight-fold Way

The medial path

This is the **medial path** between **expressing** the emotions and **suppressing** or **repressing** the emotions. Every emotional arousal involves a disturbance of the body and mind. The body becomes tensed and uncomfortable while the mind is unhappy. It is to overcome this discomfort and unhappiness that we unconsciously begin to release the tension in action to obtain what is desired, to get rid of what is hated or to run away from what is feared. What the Buddha points out is that **it is possible to learn to consciously relax the tension, instead of unconsciously releasing the tension in action**. This is the **medial way** that eliminates the discomfort and unhappiness **without suppression or repression**. This **avoids the two extremes** of **expression** and **suppression** by means of the **medial path** of **relaxation of body** and **calmness of mind**.

This medial path begins with the proper **understanding** of the **problem and its solution** which is the **Harmonious Perspective**. Having understood the need for the elimination of emotions through the Harmonious Perspective one begins a **reorientation** of one’s life by **changing the goal** of life to **tranquility of mind**. This results in calmness of behaviour, expressed in speech, actions and life style. Having done so, one **begins to purify the mind** through the **Harmonious Exercise**, which ends in beginning to tread the Seven Steps to Awakening. This **results** in the **paradigm shift** that **awakens one from the dream of existence**. Thus **the mind** is liberated (*vimutti*) from all emotional disturbances and suffering, resulting in the **imperturbable serenity**, *NIBBĀNA*. This medial path, therefore, is the **Supernormal Eightfold Way**.

[Sabbasava Sutta](#)

Sabbasava Sutta

The far reaching need to focus on the **Fourfold Supernormal Reality** (*Cattāri Ariya Saccāni*) is very clearly pointed out in the *Sabbasava Sutta*:

“The ordinary person uneducated in the Dhamma thinks, ‘Did I exist in the past? Did I not exist in the past? In what form did I exist in the past? From what form to what form did I change in the past? Will I exist in the future? Will I not exist in the future? In what form will I exist in the future? From what form to what form will I change in the future? Do I exist now? In what form do I exist now? From what form did I come to this form? To what form will I go from this form? By thinking in this way, one arrives at one of six views:

- (1) I have a “self.”
- (2) I have no “self.”
- (3) I perceive a “self” with “Self.”
- (4) I perceive “not self” with “Self.”
- (5) I perceive “Self” with “not self.”
- (6) It is this “self” of mine that thinks, feels, speaks, acts, and experiences the consequences of good and bad acts. This “self” of mine is permanent, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, it will endure as long as eternity.

This set of speculative views is called the thicket of views, the wilderness of views, the contortion of views, the vacillation of views, the fetter of views. Fettered by this fetter of views, the uneducated ordinary person is not freed from birth, ageing, death, grief, lamentation, pain, depression, and exhaustion. He is not freed from suffering I say.

The supernormal individual who is well educated and skilled in the *Dhamma* and discipline understands how to think, what to think, and what not to think, and so he thinks:

- (1) This is suffering
- (2) This is the cause of suffering
- (3) This is the cessation of suffering
- (4) This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

When he begins to think wisely in this way, three fetters are broken in him:

- (1) Personality perspective (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*)
- (2) Cognitive dissonance (*vicikiccā*)
- (3) Heteronomous morality (*sīlabbata parāmāsa*).

[Paradigm Shift](#)

Paradigm shift

The modern traditional way of explaining the **Antecedental Concurrence** (*paṭicca samuppāda*) is based on the notion of “**karma and rebirth**,” and it appears to be an explanation of **how rebirth takes place**, and **how it can be stopped**. This is because the main problem for the modern day Buddhist is: “**How can we stop this process of rebirth?**” In other words, rebirth is the problem. **Rebirth is suffering** and **end of rebirth** is the **end of suffering**. Thus it is claimed that **Nirvana** is the **stopping of rebirth**.

The fact that this is not the problem is indicated in the following quotation from the Buddha:

Numerous lives in saṅsāra,
I ran in pursuit of the Creator;

*Anekajātisaṃsāram –
sandhāvissam anibbisam*

And never did I ever meet him,
So painful is repeated birth.

*Gahakāraṃ gavesanto –
dukkhā jāti punappunam.*

O! Creator now I saw you,
No more will you create again;

*Gahakāraṃ diṭṭho’ si –
puna geham na kāhasi*

Your supports are all destroyed,

Your structure is fully dismantled;

*Sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā –
gahakūṭam visañkhitam*

My mind has stopped creating
the emotional urge has ceased.

*Visañkhāragatam cittam –
tanhānam khayam ajjhagā.*

(Dhammapada verses 153 & 154)

The first verse is a description of his experience before awakening from the **dream of existence**. He was thinking in an **existential** way, searching for the Creator. Then he got into **experiential thinking** and saw how his own mental process of perception was the creator of the world. In other words, he saw the **Antecedental Concurrence** (*paṭicca samuppāda*). When he saw from this different angle of vision, he was free from all suffering. This was the **paradigm shift**.

[Beginning of Life](#)

Beginning of life

From a modern scientific point of view, what we call **life** is only an **unconscious electro-chemical activity** that begins due to the presence of the necessary conditions, and ends due to the absence of the necessary conditions. Each necessary condition is also dependent on other necessary conditions without an ultimate beginning.

This dynamic process of electrochemical activity follows the **natural law of determinism**, which means that every activity is determined by the presence of the necessary conditions. Life began when a special kind of molecule came into being due to presence of the necessary conditions. This molecule had a special ability to absorb atoms from the surroundings and produce molecules of its own kind. This **self-replicating molecule** was not the product of a Supernatural Creator either God or Devil. It came into being only due to the presence of the necessary conditions.

This means, that the electrochemical process called **life** began automatically, based on the natural law of determinism. New molecules thus formed, however, began to break down when some necessary conditions were absent. Therefore two processes continued at the same time: a building up process (anabolism) and a breaking down process (catabolism), collectively known as “metabolism.” When the building up process was faster than the breaking down process, the net result was growth. When the breaking down process was faster than the building up process, the net result was decay, leading ultimately to death. The continuity of these two processes of growth and decay, is what we call **life**. It was this process of growth and decay that appeared to Charles Darwin as an unconscious **struggle for existence**.

As conditions in the environment changed, however, the environment itself likewise changed, and was no longer favourable for this struggle to continue. Though most molecules were destroyed, a few molecules somehow were able to survive at least for some time, despite the hardships. This survival became possible only through an adaptation to the changing environment, in some way. This was what made Darwin speak of the **survival of the fittest**, though it was only a temporary survival, because every integration was subject to disintegration when even one necessary condition was absent. All these facts however boil down to one single fact that this unconscious struggle was a **mission impossible**. It was a struggle to exist where **existence was not possible**, because life is only a **dynamic process of activity**, rather than a **static “existence.”** **Existence is a static concept in a dynamic reality.**

Among the early scientific theories of how the first self-replicating molecule came into existence was the “primordial soup,” where simple molecules mixed together in a broth that was regularly energised by ultraviolet light and electric storms. Scientists have long believed RNA molecules were more likely to be the origin of life than DNA. Now they think there must have been a simpler molecule that spawned RNA.

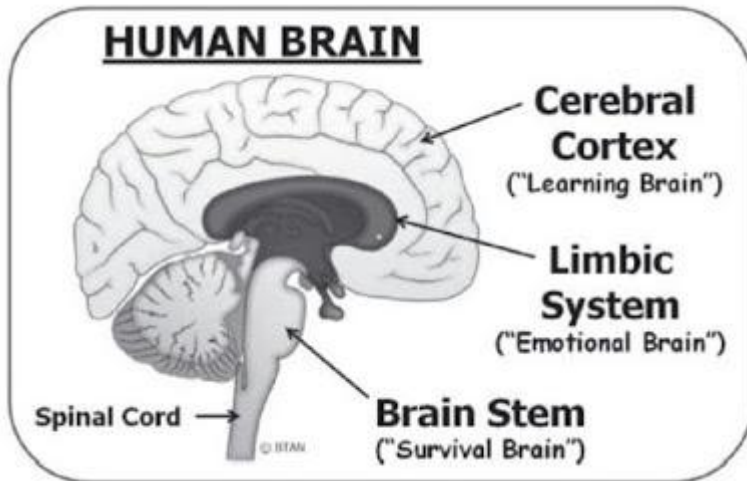
This **unconscious chemical activity** called **life**, though it started with one self-replicating molecule, began to produce several molecules of the same kind, and each new molecule began to create a series of other molecules, and many such series or chains of molecules came into being. Then these molecules began to combine to form cells, and cells combined to form tissues, tissues combined to form organs, organs combined to form systems, and systems combined to form organisms. That was how the molecules evolved to produce organisms such as plants and animals. It was this unconscious electro-chemical activity that developed into what is today called the **biochemical** process of **evolution**. Charles Darwin saw this unconscious biological activity as a struggle for existence. This struggle though unconscious, and not wilfully done, was a **mission impossible**. It was a **futile struggle** because **real existence** was not a **possibility**. Existence was a **static concept in a dynamic reality**. In other words, existence is a **conceptual fallacy** or a **delusion**.

[Evolution of the Human Brain](#)

Evolution of the human brain

When this impossible struggle for existence continued, the environment was not always favourable to this struggle. When the environmental conditions changed, many organisms died but a few were able to survive by adapting to the

environmental conditions. Because the adaptation was some kind of change in the organism, the organisms began to change in structure and function in adapting to environmental conditions. This changing evolutionary process therefore began to develop organisms with differences in structure and function. As a result of this adaptation many different species of organisms evolved, with a variety of structures and functions befitting a variety of environmental conditions. They also began to develop what are called systems, where several organs combined to deal with a problem in the environment. As conditions in the environment became more and more challenging, the systems became correspondingly more and more complex. As systems became complex, they began to develop **cardiovascular systems** that circulated blood, and even **nervous systems** that carried messages like telephone wires. As the nervous systems began to develop more complex structures and functions, it led to the development of a **brain**. The brain began to develop from a primitive structure called the **brain stem** which regulates basic life functions such as respiration, digestion, blood circulation, and metabolism – these are the autonomous functions that kept the organism alive and healthy.



As conditions in the environment became more and more challenging, the brain gradually began to evolve further and so aid the survival of the species. This resulted in the development of another part of the brain called the **limbic system** that helped in starting an emotional reaction in response to stimulation by the environment. It is this reaction that we now call **emotional arousal**. The Limbic System is the **emotional command center** of the organism, which is responsible for regulating differences in the mood or temper such as calmness and excitement. Within the **Limbic System** is a structure known as the **Amygdala** which is responsible for scanning the environment through the sense organs, to detect signs of potential threats and danger to the organism. When aroused, the Amygdala triggers the **fight or flight response**, to protect the organism from harm. It is this reaction that is commonly called **stress** today, which if prolonged can develop into the **general adaptation syndrome**, which turns **stress** into **distress**.

As the brain evolved further, higher forms of organisms such as mammals evolved, with the formation of the **Cerebrum** which contained the **Cerebral Cortex**, or **Neo-cortex** that is responsible for **thinking**. As evolution progressed further the Cerebrum developed into two hemispheres: left and right. Within these two hemispheres of the Cerebral Cortex came four major pairs of lobes: frontal lobes, temporal lobes, occipital lobes, and parietal lobes. In this way the human brain developed with a **Pre-Frontal Cortex (PFC)** in the frontal lobes, which equipped the human being with highly advanced and sophisticated cognitive functions such as planning, goal setting, decision making, judgment, reasoning, rationalization and speech.

[The Impersonality of Consciousness](#)

The impersonality of consciousness

With the development of these special parts of the brain came the activity called **consciousness**. Thus came into being the species of organism called the **Human Being**, the most advanced and sophisticated species that has the most advanced cognitive capacity and functions. It is this species that became aware of an environment called the "**world**," and also became aware of a "**self**" that **exists** in the world.

In other words, it is this **impersonal** electrochemical activity called **consciousness** that has given rise to an awareness of an **objective "world,"** and a **subjective "self."** It is this **consciousness** that has given rise to an **experience** which has two parts: a **subjective** and an **objective**. The "**world**" that we are aware of is an **objective experience**. The "**self**" that we are aware of is a **subjective experience**. The **self** is the result of **personalization** of the subjective experience. This means the "**self**," being a product of the subjective process called consciousness, **does not exist** apart from the process of consciousness. Therefore it is an appearance rather than a reality. The **world** that we are aware of is also a product of the process of consciousness. It too is a mere appearance. In other words, both the **world** and the **self** are subjective **experiences** rather than objective **existences** that stand apart from the **subjective experience**. In other words, the "**self**" and the "**world**," though they are supposed to **exist**, do not really exist by themselves. If this is so, the **self** and the **world** are mere **delusions**.

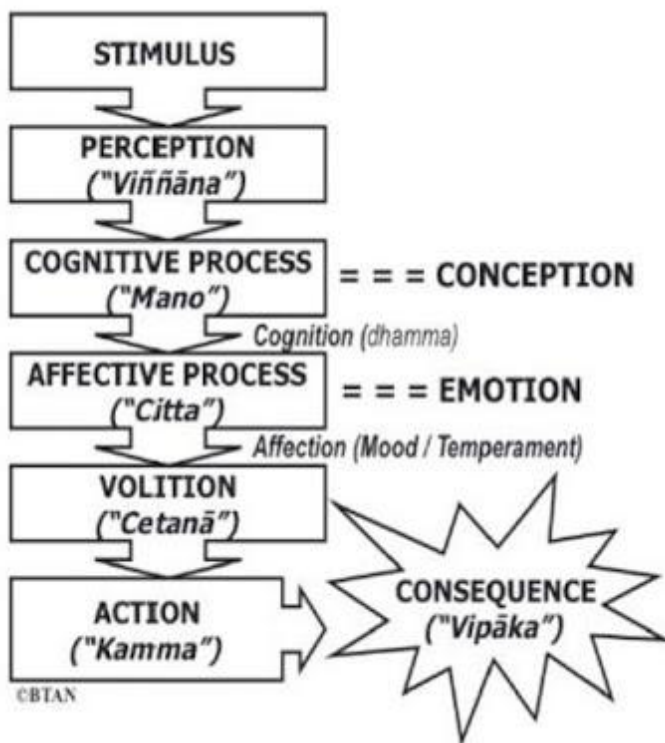
If this process called Life began as an **unconscious electrochemical activity** of a self-replicating **molecule**, it is this unconscious electrochemical activity that produced the **consciousness**. It is this **consciousness** that produced the **self** and the **world** that we are aware of. If this **self** and the **world** do not **exist** apart from consciousness, it means neither the **self**, nor the **world** has a real objective **existence**.

Although our **thinking faculty** (cognition = *mano*) may be aware of this fallacy, our emotions (affective = *citta*) are unaware. It is our blind emotions that desire existence, but our reason is aware that this blind desire clashes with the reality of non-existence. This **clash** between **blind desire** and **reality** leads to **frustration**. It is this frustration that we call **suffering**, or the **insecurity of life**.

[The Five Constituents of Personality](#)

The five constituents of personality (*Pañca Upādānakkhandha*)

The Pali term *upādāna* is translated here as **personalization** and not as **clinging** or **grasping** because the meaning conveyed by the term *upādāna* is **personalization**, which is to regard something as **mine, me, or myself** (*etaṃ mama, eso hamasmī, eso me attāti*). The personality is created by personalizing the constituents (*khandha*) as “mine” or “myself.”



The term *khandha* is translated as **constituent** and not as **aggregate** because the term *khandha* refers to the **constituents** that constitutes the **personality**.

An effort has been made here to convey the meaning of the **statement** in relation to the meaning of the **words**.

Personality is the product of personalization of the constituents of personality. The constituents of the personality, however, are **not the constituents of the body** as some tend to think. It is the **constituents of the subjective process of perception** that we tend to personalize and regard as “**my self**.” It is the **process of perception** that the Buddha analysed as **mental image** (*rūpa*), **feeling** (*vedanā*), **sensation** (*saññā*), **construction** (*sankhāra*) and **perception** (*viññāna*). Therefore it is the constituents of the process of perception, which are personalized to form the personality, or “self.” To explain this further, we need to go into a discussion of what is called an experience.

[What is Experience?](#)

What is experience?

First let us see ourselves as organisms in an environment. The organism is a biophysical energy system very much like a machine. There are five senses in the body consisting of the eyes, ears, the nose, tongue and the entire body. When this organism is placed in an environment, the senses are stimulated by the environment, and the organism reacts to the stimulus. **Perception** is the reaction of the organism to stimulation of the senses, by the environment. An **experience** is a product of this process of perception.

The reaction of the organism is a **chain reaction** that takes the form of a **series of reactions**. The first reaction is **perception** such as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. What is perceived is carried to the brain by nerves, and the thinking part of the brain, called the cerebral cortex, or neocortex, gives meaning to what is perceived by the senses. This meaning is a **concept** about the **percept**. This giving meaning or **conception** is called **cognition**.

According to the meaning given by the **process of cognition**, an **emotion** is aroused, which is a reaction of the organism to the **cognition**, in the form of a desire, hatred, fear, or worry. According to the emotion aroused, an **action** results: to obtain what is desired, to get rid of what is hated, to run away from what is feared, etc. This **action** along with the emotion aroused is called *kamma*. Before this **action** (*kamma*) takes place, the human being has the ability to delay this action, to get sufficient time to decide what to do in this given situation, and is able to stop the emotional action or go on with it. It is this decision that is called *cetanā* which is the real *kamma*. If the decision is to act emotionally, it becomes a **bad action** (*akusala kamma*), but if the decision is to act rationally, it becomes a **good action** (*kusala kamma*). This decision to act rationally is due the **interference** of the **emotional** or **affective** process by the **rational** or **cognitive** process.

[Mind, what it is?](#)

Mind, what it is

What we call the mind is not an entity separate from the body, but an activity of the body. Therefore this chain reaction, consisting of perception, conception, emotion, and action are such activities of the body, and not separate entities. Although they are activities of the body, there is a tendency to experience these activities as activities of a subjective entity called the **mind** or **self** that exists apart from the body. What is subjectively experienced, is personalized as “mine” or “myself.” What is objectively experienced is regarded as a thing that exists outside us. What is commonly regarded as “myself” therefore is not an entity separate from the body, but only an activity of the body.

It is this chain reaction or process of perception, conception, and emotion that we personalize as “mine” or “myself.” This is how we build the concept of “self.” This “self” building process, however, is not purely rational but rather to a great extent emotional.

When one becomes aware of the process of perception through **apperception**, however, one becomes aware of how the process of perception takes place. This means one becomes aware of the **five constituents of the process of perception**. The Buddha these five constituents in the process of perception have been described by as Pañca *Upādāna Khandha*, which means the five constituents of personality. The term *khandha* is generally translated as aggregate, which does not carry the necessary meaning, which is constituent. The term *upādāna* (*upa* = inside *ādāna* = taking) is to regard as “mine,” or to personalize. Because our eyes work like a movie camera continuously taking a series of pictures, the five stages in the process of perception are a series of activities constituting the process of perception. This is why they are called the five constituents of the Process of Perception. These five constituents are as follows:

- (1) Mental Image (*rūpa*)
- (2) Feeling (*vedanā*)
- (3) Sensation (*saññā*)
- (4) Construction (*sankhāra*)
- (5) Perception (*viññāṇa*)

In speaking of the sense of sight, the Buddha spoke of the **image** (*rūpa*) perceived first. Then he spoke of the **building blocks** of the image as the **feelings** (*vedanā*) and the **sensations** (*saññā*). Next he spoke of the process of **construction** (*sankhāra*). Finally he spoke of the completion of the five stages in the process as **perception** (*viññāṇa*) in which we **distinguish** between one object and another and their **relationship**.

It is when these constituents of the process of perception are **personalized** (*upādāna*) that the idea of “self” comes into being. To personalize is to say “**this is mine**.” All that is personalized as “mine” becomes the “self.” **Personality** therefore is the product of personalization of the constituents of perception. This personality however is not a rational concept but an emotional feeling.

Take for instance the sense of sight. If we see something, we say “I see,” but where is the “I” that sees? Is it the process of perception that we refer to as “I”? The “I” is a feeling rather than an actual object perceived. If we look for an object, the only object to be seen is the **body** that occupies space and time. This is the meaning of **My Body Perspective** (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*). The process of perception takes the form of the body. The body is personalized as, “**this is mine**” or “**I perceive**.” Yet the body is not something we objectively see, other than just the visible hands, legs, abdomen or image in a mirror. The body that we think of is only a mental image constructed in the mind. The body that we see as “**my self**” is only a mental image, very different from what other people see as “**me**.” This is why when “I” see a picture of “myself” taken by

someone, it looks very different from what “I” think “I am.” It is by personalizing the **body** in the form of a **mental image** that the **notion of personality** or “**self**” comes into being.

It is interesting to note that Sigmund Freud divided the personality into three parts: the *id*, the *ego*, and the super *ego*. The *id* referred to the emotions, and the *ego* referred to reason. The *super ego* was the conscience. He found the *id* coming in conflict with the *ego*, and even with the super *ego*. He found it difficult to resolve the conflict between blind emotions and the rational intellect. The emotional *id* could not be eradicated, Freud thought, because they were instincts that were built into the system. Therefore his partial solution was through sublimation, which was to redirect the energy of the emotions along socially acceptable channels. He also spoke of the discontent of civilization, because to be civilized is to consciously suppress lust and hate, which is to experience frustration and disappointment.

The Buddha was aware of this conflict, although he did not use the same terminology. It is important to know that the Buddha pointed out that the difficulty in resolving the conflict was due to **personalization of the *id*, *ego*, and super *ego***. He spoke of **four kinds of personalization** (*upādāna*).

- (1) personalization of **emotion** (*kāma upādāna*) = ***id***
- (2) personalization of reasoning (*diṭṭhi upādāna*) = ***ego***
- (3) personalization of morals (*sīlabbata upādāna*) = ***super ego***
- (4) personalization of notion of self (*attavāda upādāna*) = **personality**.

The Buddha pointed out that the conflict can be resolved only by undoing the personalization (*anupādāna*) of the emotion (*id*), the reasoning (*ego*), and the morals (*super ego*). The Buddha took these activities to be impersonal processes dependent on conditions, while Freud took them to be parts of the personality. It is due to personalization that the resolution of the conflict became difficult for Freud. It was by un-personalization (*anupādāna*) that the Buddha was able to resolve the conflict. It is important to distinguish this un- **personalization** from the depersonalization disorder or neurosis referred to in psychiatry.

The beginning

This brings us to a discussion of how the Buddha awakened from the dream of existence. He started as a Bodhisatta learning to sacrifice everything he thought he had, including his own body and mind. In one lifetime he saw a tigress trying to eat her cubs out of hunger. He sacrificed his own body to the tigress and thus saved the cubs. Another time he was born as a king and he sacrificed all his property, his palace, his children and even his wife, and went into the forest to live there. Finally he was born in the Heaven of Contentment (*Tusita*) as the King of that Heaven (*Santutthi*) waiting till the time was ready for him to become a Buddha.

When the time was ripe, he was born into a royal family as Prince Siddhatta. From the time he was born he was pampered by the attendants till one day during a ploughing ceremony he experienced the first solitude, when the attendants were busy attending to the ceremony. That was the time he entered the first ecstasy (*jhāna*) in this new life as a Prince. We have explained what an ecstasy was. It was standing out of the sensual world. When he reached the age of 16 his father got him married against his wishes. After his marriage he was not interested in the common sensual pleasures of married life. So he lived married for 13 years till the age of 29, till he decided to renounce the worldly (mundane) life and enter a spiritual (supra mundane) life.

The Great Renunciation

His decision to renounce occurred when he saw an old man, a sick man and a corpse. He became aware of the realities of life. He realized that every plant, animal, and human being that is born must grow old, fall sick and die. Everything in the world, even inanimate things, must grow old, fall sick, and die. Attachment to them is the cause of all suffering. Normal human beings, though aware of this fact, still keep seeking these evanescent things and suffer. When he saw a renounced person, he thought: "Here is one man who does the opposite. That is the right thing to do. I will do the same." So he gave up his princely life, his loving father and his loving aunt who mothered him, his beautiful wife, his newly born child, and even his future as a king or emperor, and withdrew into the forest, to live an ascetic life, learning meditation from well-known meditation masters of the time. Before he left the family, however, he did produce a child, because he didn't want to leave the wife alone and unhappy.

His main purpose in life was to **conquer the blind emotions** and solve **the problem of existence**, which is **death or mortality** itself. We are caught up in a trap, where blind emotions are carrying us unconsciously towards an inevitable, unpredictable death that is hanging over our head, like the sword of Damocles, liable to fall and crush us into pieces at any time. It is this same problem that all religions (monotheistic, polytheistic or humanistic) are attempting to solve in their own way. Most religions appear to be escapes from reality into a fantasy, but Prince Siddhatta gave up the theistic approach and took up a humanistic approach to solve the problem, using human intelligence. He saw that the obstacle that prevented him from using the human intelligence was human emotions. So he removed all emotional disturbances from his system by learning to practice tranquillity by letting go. This helped him to change his thinking.

Asceticism

Asceticism

He practiced tranquillity to the highest level possible. At first he learned this from his meditation teachers but he could not reach the highest point, because the teachers had not reached the highest point. So he decided to practice asceticism with five ascetics. He even stopped eating till he became like a skeleton. Then he tried to stop breathing. This resulted in his fainting, when some thought he was dead. When, however, he woke up, he thought: "All these days I have been trying to learn from others and do what other people did. Now I will go my own way."

He started to eat to strengthen his body and mind. He recalled how as a child he had entered the first ecstasy automatically by letting go of everything. He thought: "This is what I will do now. I will let go, give up everything." This way he gave up all the five hindrances, lust, hate, lethargy, worry, and indecision. This resulted in the appearance of the five constituents of ecstasy

Entering Ecstasy

Entering Ecstasy

- (1) The first ecstasy: with inquiry, inference, serenity, comfort, and stillness of mind.
- (2) Then the second ecstasy: with serenity, comfort, and stillness of mind.
- (3) Then the third ecstasy: with comfort and stillness of mind.
- (4) Then the fourth ecstasy: with stillness and apperception.

1st Jhāna	Inference (<i>vitakka</i>)	Inquiry (<i>vicāra</i>)	Rapture (<i>pīti</i>)	Comfort (<i>sukha</i>)	Stillness of Mind (<i>ekaggatā</i>)
2nd Jhāna			Rapture (<i>pīti</i>)	Comfort (<i>sukha</i>)	Stillness of Mind (<i>ekaggatā</i>)
3rd Jhāna				Comfort (<i>sukha</i>)	Stillness of Mind (<i>ekaggatā</i>)
4th Jhāna					Stillness of Mind (<i>ekaggatā</i>)

Then he began to enter the cognitive ecstasies:

- (1) The realm of infinite space
- (2) The realm of infinite perception
- (3) The realm of nothingness
- (4) The realm of neither sensation nor no sensation
- (5) The cessation of sensation and feeling.

This last state was the absolute unconsciousness (*avijjā*), where the consciousness was absent though the body was alive. It was when he woke up from this state that he began to become aware of the mental process by which the “world” that we are aware of, the “self” we are aware of, and the “suffering” we are aware of, came into being. All this came out of the process of perception, conception, cognition, and affection. These psychophysical activities did not arise due to the commandments of a supernatural Creator, but only because of the presence of the necessary conditions.

This experience made him realize that the mind is not an entity separate from the body, but an activity of the body, which when perceived subjectively appears to be mental and when observed objectively appears to be physical. In other words, experience is dichotomized into a subjective and an objective. He also saw that the cognitive process creates the objective “world,” and the affective emotional process creates the subjective “self,” and the resulting suffering.

[How the Objective Process Creates the World](#)

How the objective process creates the world

Environmental activities stimulate the five sense organs in the following manner:

We start with the assumption: **organism (A)** is in the **environment (B)**. Yet the organism and environment are products of the process of perception, which needs A & B to start with. The organism contains the **body**, the **five senses**, and the **brain**.

- EYE: is stimulated by light in the environment coming in the form of electromagnetic waves
- EAR: is stimulated by sound waves coming in the form of movements in the air
- NOSE: is stimulated by odorant molecules touching the olfactory bulb inside the nose
- TONGUE: is stimulated by flavour molecules touching gustatory receptors in the taste buds
- BODY: is stimulated by Touch: as pressure, temperature, and vibration of tactile objects

If we consider the sense of sight, what is perceived by the eye is only a visual image (*rūpa*). The image is produced when the body reacts to the stimulus and so experiences a feeling (*vedanā*) and a sensation (*saññā*). Sensation (*saññā*) refers to the “colour,” and feeling (*vedanā*) refers to the pleasantness or unpleasantness of the colour.

In the case of hearing, sensation (*saññā*) refers to the nature of the sound, and feeling (*vedanā*) refers to the pleasantness or unpleasantness felt in the ear.

Sensation (*saññā*) is always accompanied by feeling (*vedanā*) and so they are inseparable. Sensation and the feeling are reactions of the organism to stimulation by the environment.

Sensation and feeling become the raw material used for the construction of mental images by the thinking part of the brain.

This construction process (*sankhāra*) is a mental activity. The result of this activity of construction is the formation of the mental images, which are perceived (*viññāṇa*). From moment to moment, every mental image (*rūpa*) that arises fades away to be replaced by another mental image that arises. This happens in a continuous manner, making us feel the continuity to be seen as a static existence.

Since a multiplicity of objects are present in a complex mental image, a **differentiation** between one object and another becomes necessary in the process of **perception** (*viññāṇa*).

All sense organs continuously feed mental images to the brain and the brain makes use of these images and forms concepts about the environment. In the formation of concepts, the brain uses past experiences. In doing so it puts images into categories (*papañceti*), and that is how we recognize and identify objects. We react emotionally according to the way we identify objects.

It is this reaction that bifurcates the experience perceived into a subjective and objective. The subjective is personalized and the objective is alienated, creating a **self** and an **other**.

This is how we create the world that we are aware of and the **self** that lives in the world. Then an **emotional relationship** develops between the self and the world. This relationship begins the **suffering** due to meeting and parting.

When we examine the formula laid down by the Buddha as the Concurrence of Antecedents, we find that it begins with **unconsciousness**. This means the mental process of creation of objects begins from a state of unconsciousness as experienced by the Buddha. The Building process begins with **feeling and sensation** (*vedanā* and *saññā*). As one goes through the cognitive ecstasies backwards, one comes to the fourth affective ecstasy and from there to (the third affective ecstasy where **breathing** begins. It is only at the first ecstasy that **conceptual thinking** (*vitakka vicāra*) begins. The Buddha pointed out that construction is of three kinds:

- (1) Mental Construction (*Citta Saṅkhāra*): feeling and sensation (*vedanā-saññā*)
- (2) Verbal Construction (*Vacī Saṅkhāra*): inquiry and inference (*vitakka-vicāra*)
- (3) Physical Construction (*Kāya Saṅkhāra*): breathing in and out (*assāsa-passāsa*).

Objects are constructed by these three processes. The feelings and sensations are like the bricks that build a wall. The object is built using questions and answers such as: What is this? This is a tree, or this is a dog, or this is a man. The physical energy for this activity of construction is obtained from the breathing. The construction ends up in **perception** (*viññāṇa*).

What is perceived is the object in the form of an **image** (*rūpa*), and the **name** (*nāma*) that identifies the object. In this same way the five senses go into action individually and collectively to form images with identities. Whatever information is obtained through sensory perception is transferred to the brain where thinking occurs to give meaning to what is perceived. Thus the **sensory world** (*saḷāyatana*) is created. With the creation of the sensory world, the process of **cognition** (*phassa*) is completed.

[How the Affective Process Creates the "Self"](#)

How the affective process creates the "self"

From here on the affective process begins. Once the cognitive process gets started, the feelings become ready for action. The three kinds of **feelings** (*vedanā*): pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral, become targets to which **emotional reactions** (*tanhā*) are fired. At the beginning during the cognitive process the experience was only objective and single. Now with the coming of the **emotional reaction** (*tanhā*), the experience of perception is bifurcated into a **subjective** and an **objective**. The object perceived becomes the objective, and the emotional reaction and the process of perception becomes the subjective.

When this happens the subjective part is **personalized** (*upādāna*) as "mine." What is personalized turns into the personality, the "self." The personality is created by the **emotional reaction** (*tanhā*). The object is externalized as "other." When the question arises: What are we referring to as the "self?" The only answer is the **body** that occupies space and time. Thus begins the "**I am the body**' perspective" (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*).

When the body has become the "self," I have a past, present and future. The past of the body is **birth**, the future of the body is **death**. The present of the body is **ageing**. With this comes meeting the unpleasant **ageing**, **sickness**, and **death**, and parting from the pleasant **youth**, **health**, and **life**. Not getting what one desires: eternal youth, health, life. This ends with

grief, lamentation, pain, distress, and exhaustion.

[Awakening](#)

Awakening

Here ends the **Concurrence of Antecedents** (*paṭicca samuppāda*). When this is reflected on, one begins **to see how things come to be**. This way of thinking is called **thinking genetically** (*yoniso manasikāra*). This thinking brings about the **paradigm shift** from **personal existence** to **impersonal experience**. This results in **awakening** from the **dream of existence**, ending in the **imperturbable serenity – NIRVANA**.

[Buddhism & Hinduism](#)

Buddhism and Hinduism

Hinduism has not totally rejected Buddhism. It has absorbed Buddhism while preserving their favourite dogmas. It was Shankaracharya who became a Buddhist monk to study Buddhism and then gave up robes to write commentaries to the Vedas using Buddhist concepts. This was how he obtained the name **The Buddhist in disguise** (*Pracchanna Bhauddha*) by the Brahmins themselves. The other Brahmin Patanjali who wrote the Patanjali Yoga Sasthra formulated his meditation system in imitation of the Supernormal Eightfold Path of the Buddha and called it the path taught by the Rishi Kapila who lived before the Buddha. Yet Kapila is believed to have taught the Sankya Yoga Sastra and not the Atthanga Yoga of Patanjali.

The interesting point, however, is the relationship between Buddhism and the Three Murthi: Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. These three names do not refer to three gods. These three words refer to the three forms of one God: Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer. These three forms of God are recognized even in Christianity. It is generally believed by Hindus that the Buddha is an incarnation of Vishnu, which means that the Buddha is a preserver. But the fact is, however, that it is more meaningful to consider the Buddha as an incarnation of Siva. This means that the Buddha is a destroyer rather than a preserver. It would even be more meaningful to think of Siva as a symbolic representation of the Buddha. Why?

[Buddha the Destroyer of the World](#)

Buddha is the destroyer of the world

The reason is that from the original Buddhist point of view, the Buddha is the destroyer of the world. He destroyed the world by Awakening from the **Dream of Existence of a world with a “self” in it.** The well-known verses already mentioned, makes this clear:

Numerous lives in samsara,
I ran in pursuit of the Creator;

*Anekajātisaṃsāram
sandhāvissaṃ anibbisam*

And never did I ever meet him,
So painful is repeated birth.

*Gahakārakam gavesanto
dukkhā jāti punappunam.*

Now you are seen, Oh Creator
No more will you create again;

*Gahakāraka diṭṭhosi
puna geham na kāhasi*

Your supports are all destroyed,
Your structure is fully dismantled;

*Sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā
gahakūṭam visaṅkhitam*

My mind has stopped creating
the emotional urge has ceased.

*Visaṅkhāragatam cittam
taṇhānam khayam ajjhagā.*

(*Dhammapada verses 153 & 154*)

These two verses represent the **paradigm shift** from existential thinking to experiential thinking. The first verse depicts the **existential paradigm**, and the second verse depicts the **experiential paradigm**. In the existential paradigm the **objective world** and the **subjective self** exists. In the experiential paradigm they **do not exist**.

[The Two Paradigms](#)

The two Paradigms

There is more to the relationship between Buddhism and Siva. Every person who goes into meditation begins to feel as if one has gone out of one's normal life, and is spending some time on vacation. As one progresses in meditation, the time comes when one begins to feel that the hours of meditation is the real home and the time one is not meditating is the vacation.

Here we begin to experience a paradigm shift. The **time in meditation** is spent in the **paradigm of experience** and the **time in ordinary life** is the time spent in the **paradigm of existence**. It is possible to **toggle between the two paradigms** the existential and the experiential, as we have mentioned earlier.

It is interesting to note that Siva is seen in two forms: Siva in meditation, and Siva in dance. These **two forms of Siva** can be seen as the two paradigms: the **Siva in dance** is the existential paradigm, and **Siva in meditation** is the experiential paradigm.

We have already spoken of the **two forms** of **Nibbāna** (Nirvana): (1) *Saupādisesā* and (2) *Anupādisesā* (*Itivuttaka* 44 – p38):

(1) *Saupādisesā Nibbāna* (Nirvana) = the existential mode

(2) *Anupādisesā Nibbāna* (Nirvana) = the experiential mode

These two terms are defined quite differently in the traditional Theravada school of thought today. It is as follows:

(1) Saupadisesa Nibbāna (Nirvana) = Experience of the Buddha or emancipator, while living.

(2) Anupadisesa Nibbāna (Nirvana) = Experience of the Buddha or emancipator, after death.

This interpretation of the modern Theravada school of Buddhism is similar to the Hindu idea of Jeevan mukta and Videha mukta.

(1) Jeevan mukta – (*saupadisesa*)

(2) Videha mukta – (*anupadisesa*)

This is probably an influence or intermixture of Hinduism and Buddhism.

[Nibbana \(Nirvana\)](#)

Nibbāna

The Buddha has always stated that *Nibbāna* (Nirvana) is **the Cessation of Existence** (*bhava nirodho Nibbānan*). **Nirvana** is **not the destruction of an existing object** but a **paradigm shift** from existential thinking to experiential thinking. The emancipator can toggle between these two paradigms occasionally, but most of the time he or she remains in the experiential mode (*Nirodha samāpatti*). Only occasionally, for a purpose like going on the alms round (*pindapāta*), or discussing the *Dhamma* (*dhammīvā kathā*) does he or she enters the existential mode.

The well-known statement of the Buddha “**Speak on the Dhamma or maintain the Ariya silence** (*dhammīvā kathā ariyo vā tunhibhāvo*) refers to the same toggle. The Ariya silence (*ariyo vā tunhibhāvo*) is really the experiential mode (*Nirodha samāpatti*), and discussing the *Dhamma* is the existential mode.

It is interesting to note that modern scientific research refers to a toggle switch in the brain called the Reticular Activating System (RAS), which can toggle between the cognitive and affective modes. It is **probably the same RAS** that the **emancipator uses** to toggle between the existential and experiential paradigms.

Buddha's concept of God

The Buddha did have a concept of **God** though the definition of God was not theistic but **humanistic**. For the Buddha, **God** is only a **human concept**. It is the concept of perfection, in knowledge, power, and goodness; symbolized in monotheistic religion as omniscience, omnipotence, and omni-benevolence. These are the ultimate values that human beings seek, because they are born ignorant, powerless, and with a tendency to selfishness, which is evil.

Although these values are attributed to the Creator in monotheistic religion, humanistic philosophers have always questioned how such a Good Creator could create a world full of suffering and evil, or allow such things to remain in this world. Biblical religions do provide a reason for this, however, by turning the blame on the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the first humans. Yet that does not answer why there is death for other animals, or even plants and inanimate matter.

Buddhists of course do not believe in the Creation of an all-loving God. Yet Buddhists do have the concept of an “All-powerful Killer” (*Vasavatti Māra*). The Pali term *vasavatti* means all-powerful, and the term *Māra* means “Killer.” The term *Māra* also symbolizes **evil**, in Buddhism. Therefore *Mara* represents the **Devil**, in Buddhism. “God” and “Devil” in Buddhism refers to the “good” and “evil” within human nature. This means, power, in Buddhism, belongs to the Devil, rather than to God. God, for the Buddhist, is the personification of goodness and Wisdom, but not power. This is why the Buddhist takes refuge in the wisdom and goodness of the Buddha, rather than his power. The term “Buddha” refers to man become God (*Brahmabhūto*) which is the actualization of the human potential to gain perfection.

Common man seeks Supernatural power to change his natural unpleasant circumstances, but the enlightened Buddhist seeks wisdom of the Buddha to change himself. The teaching of the Buddha is about changing our selves and not about changing our circumstances. Even biological evolution progressed by **adapting** to the environment, rather than attempting to **change** the environment.

“**God**,” for the Buddhist, is the human **ideal of perfection** that human beings conceive and struggle to realize through the practice of religion. **Religion**, therefore for the Buddhist, is the **human effort** to solve the **problem of existence** (which is death). The human being is able to transcend all human weaknesses (ignorance, powerlessness and the tendency to selfishness). From this Buddhist humanistic perspective, it was man who created God, in his own image, not vice versa.

Buddhists believe that this state of perfection is a **human potential** that is actualized from time to time when the human being becomes an **Awakened One** (a **Buddha**), or **God become** (*Brahma bhūto*). This actualization of the human potential is the union with God, which all religions aspire to accomplish. To unite with God, for the Buddhist, is to become God. Just as a river enters the ocean and loses its identity, so a human being loses his identity in becoming God. This is not the deification of a human being, but the evolution of the human being to a Superhuman Divine level. Such a person who has **realized the ideal of perfection** becomes the **Anthropomorphic God** of the Buddhist.

[Becoming God](#)

Becoming God

To become God, however, is also to become fully human, by eliminating the animal nature within, which is the “self-centered emotions.” The difference between the human being and the other animals is mainly in the brain. The human being is at a higher evolutionary level, because of his ability to think and reason out logically. The modern scientific discoveries and technology, which have brought so much comfort and conveniences to mankind is the result of this ability to think. Yet this special ability of the human being is mainly used to gratify human cravings and for destructive purposes like wars and crime.

The human being today is not fully evolved, and he is not fully conscious of the damage he is doing to himself and others, and the world at large. He is obstructing the very **peace** he is craving for. It is like a baby with unsafe toys or a child with dangerous weapons. The human being is still like the animal that is carried away by emotions. Emotions are dominating his mind. His reason is only used as a slave of the emotions to gratify the emotions.

This is what Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, saw in the child and the neurotic; they are both dominated by the pleasure principle (the *id*). The difference between neurosis and normality is only a matter of degree. “All normal people (*puthujjana*),” said the Buddha, “are insane.” This means they are either psychotic or neurotic to some degree. They are mainly following two extreme ways of living, according to the Buddha. They are devoted to sensual pleasure or practicing an ascetic way of life, suppressing the emotions, both being mentally sick. According to Sigmund Freud the healthy personality is dominated by the reality principle (the *ego*). The Buddha too pointed out that the healthy way of living is the medial path between emotional indulgence and self-mortification, which is the pursuit of the imperturbable serenity of mind and body.

This means, the healthy way of living for the human being is to maintain a tranquil mind and be dominated by reason and not by emotion. All emotions are self-centered according to the Buddha, and so was it for Freud. Unselfish good behaviour is possible only when the mind is free of selfish emotions. Universal goodwill (*mettā*) is not an emotion. It comes from a mind free of the self-centered emotions. Emotion is a disturbance of the mind and body. It is a tranquil mind and a relaxed body that is free of self-centered emotions. It is such a mind that can become interested in the welfare of others for their sake. This selfless interest in the welfare of all beings (*mettā*) is genuine love. This means true love and mental health is the absence of self-centered emotions.

The rational faculty or the intellect is the special quality that distinguishes the human being from other animals. The development of this faculty and the mind being dominated by reason instead of emotion is the way to become fully human. Therefore gaining freedom from emotional domination and being dominated by reason is not only conducive to mental health, but it is also the way to become fully human. This also means, to realize the religious ideal of union with God is to become fully human. To become fully human is to transcend all human weaknesses and become superhuman. This fully human state is therefore supernormal or superhuman. It is divine because it is the realization of the ideal of perfection that human beings worship as God.

This is why Buddhism is a humanistic religion, which is a process of evolution of the human consciousness to the ultimate point in the evolutionary process. The human being transcends the ordinary imperfect human state and becomes fully human in reaching the state of perfection. In doing so the human being enters a Superhuman Divine state. This fully human state is no more human because it has transcended all human weaknesses and become united with God and become God.

[The Defeat of Mara](#)

The defeat of Mara

This Transcendence or Awakening is called the defeat of Mara, the Killer (*Māra parājaya*), which is the embodiment of evil. Throughout human history, in every religion and every culture, this idea of a conflict between **God** and the **Devil** has been expressed. This conflict is in fact the conflict between **good** and **evil** within human nature. In Buddhist thinking the Buddha takes the place of God and Mara takes the place of the Devil. In modern psychology, Sigmund Freud recognized this conflict as the conflict between the *ego* and the *id*. Today it is expressed as the conflict between the **cognitive** and the **affective**. In common parlance it is seen as the conflict between the **head** and the **heart**. The aim of the Buddha was to resolve this conflict between emotion and reason. This resolution is achieved through the wisdom of the Buddha and not his power. It was achieved through a process of evolution of the human consciousness.

The defeat of Mara also means overcoming death. This means that the Buddha attained **immortality**. This immortality, however, is not eternal life. It does not mean that he became eternal. He simply **awoke from the dream of existence**. Existence is seen in Buddhism as a dream or delusion. The normal human being is only dreaming of existence. He “does not really exist.” In other words, the normal human being is not fully conscious. It is only when he has become fully conscious that he awakens from the dream. This awakening is a matter of growth or evolution. This process of evolution, however, is not an unconscious process, as in biological evolution. It is a conscious process of psychological evolution. It has to be achieved through a conscious wilful effort of each individual. “Each individual has to make the effort, a Buddha can only show the way” (*Dhammapada* verse 276).

[Death According to Buddha](#)

Death according to Buddha

Death is the main problem of life, according to the Buddha. Life itself is a continuous struggle against death. This is what Charles Darwin saw as the struggle for existence. This struggle for existence always ends in death. Every individual who is born must die. Everyone is defeated in this fight against death. Therefore this struggle against death is futile. Immortality is seen as an unrealistic goal. The natural law is that everything that is integrated is subject to disintegration. This is the law of determinism, on which scientific discovery and invention is based. This law is that every occurrence in the world is determined by the presence of the necessary conditions.

This means the entire process of life, which is the struggle for existence, is a mistake. It is an effort to become permanent in an impermanent world. This mistaken process of life, or struggle for existence, resulting in evolution, had to continue till the conscious human being evolved with an intelligence to reason out and realize that this struggle to exist was a mistake. It is only then that the human being consciously started the psychological process of evolution of consciousness itself and ultimately awoke from the dream of existence and stopped the struggle for existence, realizing that there is no real existence to struggle for. It is only when this has been achieved that the problem of existence is perfectly solved. This is also the perfect mental health. This mental health is not normal; it is supernormal and superhuman and therefore divine. This is the transcendence of human nature and man becoming God, the anthropomorphic God.

Even before the human being rises to that highest perfect level of evolution, if he turns his mind in that direction, and begins to move towards the goal of awakening he has entered the stream that flows into the ocean of “Awakening.” This entrance is a sublime (*ariya*) level, at which one begins to enjoy a happiness that ordinary people do not experience. Such a person is called one who has entered the stream (*sotāpanna*). Only such a person has become a true Buddhist. One does not become a Buddhist by birth or even conviction; one becomes a Buddhist only by beginning the conscious process of evolution of consciousness. This is a level of mental health where one is free from all neurosis and psychosis. At this stage one becomes mentally healthy in the normal sense, though the perfect mental health is gained only when one awakens fully from the dream of existence.

Existential philosophers pointed to the problem: “out of all animals it is the human being who is aware of his own existence and is also aware that he is going to die.” This creates anxiety, worry, fear, and anguish. Theistic existentialists attempted to solve the problem by taking the leap of faith. The atheistic existentialists attempted to solve it by using human potentials.

It is this same **problem of existence**, which is death and **unhappiness** that all religions **HOPE** to solve, sometimes through an escape from reality into a fantasy of eternal life.

It was the **Buddha**, however, who **solved the problem of existence** by means of a **paradigm shift** from **existential thinking** to **experiential thinking**. He **Awakened** from the **fantasy** of **eternal existence** into the **reality** of the **absence of existence**. This is why he is called the BUDDHA, the one who has **awakened from the dream of existence**.

ARIYAMAGGA BHAVANA III THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY STEPS TO AWAKENING

Conclusion

The system of meditation described in the three booklets in the form of three levels of meditative experience is nothing other than the Supernormal Eightfold Way (*ariya aṭṭhangika magga*).

We have translated the word “*ariya*” as the “Supernormal” because that is the meaning of the term “*ariya*.” The Buddha used another term *puthujjana* (normal) to emphasise the distinction between normal (*puthujjana*) and supernormal (*ariya*). Modern psychologists use the two terms normal and abnormal to indicate two levels of consciousness. The Buddha used these terms normal and supernormal to indicate two other levels of consciousness.

The three levels of meditative experience are nothing other than the well-known three levels of practice: purity of behaviour (*sīla*), emotional purity (*samādhi*), intellectual purity (*paññā*). These three levels of practice come under the Supernormal Eightfold Way, the true path of purity.

The first five steps in the Supernormal Eightfold Way cover the purity of behaviour (*sīla*). The sixth step covers the emotional purity (*samādhi*). The seventh and eighth steps cover the intellectual purity (*paññā*).

The completion of the Supernormal Eightfold Way involves a paradigm shift, which is not merely an intellectual transformation but also an emotional and behavioural one. In other words, it is a complete change in disposition, character, or personality. A self-centered individual is transformed into a selfless individual.

The transformed individual becomes a spiritually emancipated individual who has broken ten bonds or fetters. This is because the self-centered individual is fettered by ten fetters to the existential mode. The ten fetters (*samyojana*) are as follows:

- (1) Personal body perspective (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*).
- (2) Cognitive dissonance (*vicikiccā*)
- (3) Heteronomous morality (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*)
- (4) Avarice (*kāma-rāga*)
- (5) Aversion (*paṭigha*)
- (6) Visual lust (*rūpa-rāga*)
- (7) Lust for non-visual being (*arūpa-rāga*)
- (8) Egotism (*māna*)
- (9) Excitement (*uddhacca*)
- (10) Unconsciousness (*avijjā*).

The practice of the first five steps in the Supernormal Eightfold Way helps break the first three fetters. When these are broken the practitioner becomes one who has entered the stream. The stream is the Supernormal Eightfold Way that leads to *Nibbāna* (Nirvana). Just as a river falls into the ocean, ultimately, one who becomes a stream enterer ultimately enters *Nibbāna* (Nirvana), within seven lives. When one enters the stream one has also entered the Supernormal level, at least in terms of behaviour. One does not practice good behaviour only to satisfy others, or to gain some rewards. One behaves well because one has understood the need for good behaviour, especially in consideration for others as well as oneself. This is the meaning of **autonomous morality**.

The practice of the sixth step in the Supernormal Eightfold Way, which is the Harmonious Exercise (*sammā vāyāma*), helps to bring about emotional purity and tranquillity (*samādhi*), at least to the level of the first ecstasy (*paṭhama jhāna*). If this

emotional purity is accompanied by a certain level of intellectual purity (*paññā*), the fourth and fifth fetters (*kāmarāga paṭigha*) could be diminished to the extent of becoming a once returner (*sakadāgāmi*).

The practice of the seventh and eighth steps in the Supernormal Eightfold Way, which are the **Harmonious Attention** and the **Harmonious Equilibrium**, which in other words is the practice of the **Seven Steps to Awakening**, results in the **paradigm shift**, leading to **Awakening** from the “**dream of existence**,” and experiencing the **Imperturbable Serenity – Nibbāna** (Nirvana).

The teaching of the Buddha is a human discovery, and is dealing with a human problem and its solution, through a human technique. This is why it is neither theistic nor atheistic, but humanistic.

The Buddha offers a method of transcending normal human nature. This is why this method is called Supernormal. He deals with the basic problem of human existence, which is the **insecurity of life**. Insecurity is the constant impending death, like the sword of Damocles hanging down above the head, which can fall and kill one at any moment. Out of all the animals in the world it is the human being who is fully aware of its own existence and also aware of its own death. Yet the normal human being prefers to forget about death and enjoy life thinking: “Eat drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” That is what is commonly called optimism.

Of course some attempt to solve the problem by way of a flight from reality into fantasy. They attempt to step into another world by means of alcohol or hallucinogenic drugs. When the evil consequences of such practices are recognized, however, they try out meditation, hoping it would carry one to another world, which is safer than the drug induced heaven.

Other helpers point to a more traditional and historic one. It is one that has stood the times, though the solution cannot be verified until one dies. It is taken without question, on blind faith. It is based on a **great hope** that after death the believer will have eternal life and eternal happiness. The non-believers are condemned unmercifully, to suffer eternal hellfire.

It is this same **problem of existence** that the Buddha set out to solve, but not through an escape into fantasy, but through a **psychological paradigm shift** that solves the problem here and now. It is the **Awakening** from the **dream of existence**.

This means the normal human being is not fully awake, but is **dreaming**, or suffering from a delusion, the **delusion of existence**. This was expressed by the Buddha in the words, “All normal human beings are insane” (*sabbe putujjanā ummattakā*). The only solution was to **awaken from this dream of existence**.

PLEASE NOTE

The three booklets on meditation that we have published contain information on the **ultimate solution** of the **problem of existence** – which is **birth, ageing, sickness, and death** – **The ever-threatening insecurity of life** (*dukkha*).

REBIRTH

Introduction

When someone meets with an unforeseen disaster like “tsunami,” we often hear people say, “Oh, it must be his or her karma.” All Buddhists will not only seem to agree but they will also try to sympathize with the unfortunate individual. Even the individual who suffers from the disaster will accept it and do nothing about it, other than cry and lament. It is this common reaction of Buddhists that makes people often say, “Buddhism is a pessimistic religion.” Is this attitude of the Buddhists in agreement with the teachings of the Buddha?

The Buddha has always pointed out that it is not what circumstance a person meets that matters but it is one’s attitude to the circumstance that really matters. This means, it is how one acts in response to the circumstance that is most important. **Karma** means **action**, not the **consequence** of the action. The consequence is called *vipaka*. Most Buddhists make the mistake of calling the consequence karma. It is the way one responds to one’s circumstances that matters not the circumstance alone. In other words, “It is your attitude that determines your altitude.”

Although this wrong attitude is prevalent today among Buddhists as well as Hindus and is accepted as correct, it was not accepted by the Buddha. This was why the Buddha was never a pessimist. The notion of karma and rebirth existed in India long before the Buddha. The Buddha even accepted it as true, after he became enlightened. Yet the Buddha did not centre his teaching on the notion of karma and rebirth. He did not base his ethical teachings or his higher spiritual teachings on the notion of “karma and rebirth.” Karma was of course the reason why often bad things happened to good people or even good things happen to bad people. Some disciples of the Buddha even gained the ability to recall their own past lives and even the past lives of others through meditation as taught by the Buddha. Thereby they understood that karma and rebirth was a fact.

However, the Buddha did not lay stress on the development of psychic powers, or even the self-centered “punishment-reward” morality based on the belief in past and future lives, with the desire to go to Heaven or to escape hell. The Buddha taught an unselfish morality, which was not based on punishment and reward, but based on “love,” or the concern for the weal and welfare of all beings (*metta*). The reason why the Buddhist should refrain from harming life is not because he might go to hell as a result, but because he feels a concern for other living beings. He feels that the happiness of others is as important as one’s own. The Buddhist is not a narrow minded individual, but he is one who thinks with a brought mind that encompasses all beings. This method of moral teaching of the Buddha is called the self-reflexive method of teaching (*attupanayika dhamma pariyaya*); “Do unto others as if others were you.”

Ven. Dr. M. Punnaji has made a research lasting more than 50 years on the original teachings of Buddha, which he called “Proto Buddhism.” He has discovered that Karma and rebirth is not an essential dogma, to blindly believe in, for one who wants to practice Buddhism. In fact, the unskilled reflection on karma and rebirth can hinder one’s progress on the path of the Buddha.

In this book, Bhante Punnaji explains that the teaching of the Buddha is centered on the **insecurity** of life (*dukkha*), the cause of **insecurity** (*samudaya*), the cure for the **insecurity** (*nirodha*), and the way to cure it (*magga*). This **insecurity of life** (commonly called suffering) is caused by our emotions. It is this emotional urge (*tanha*) that brings about a relationship between a subject and an object; the subject being personalized as “self,” and the object being alienated as other. It is through personalization and alienation that the “self” and the “world” come into being. With the coming of “being” (*bhava*), or “existence,” comes the concept of space and time. With space/time come birth, aging and death. This brings about the concept of “samsara,” or the pre-existence and the re-existence of “self.” In other words, the concepts of “samsara” and “self” are the result of the unconscious emotional arousal. It is this concept of “**self**” and “**existence**” that is at the basis of **insecurity**. Their removal, by removing the self-centered unconscious emotions, is the **freedom from insecurity**.

May the merits accrued from this effort by Venerable Dr. Madawela Punnaji Maha Thera help every one of you to be free from all sufferings of Samsara by gaining the ultimate bliss of Nirvana.

Sadhu. Sadhu. Sadhu.

[Pre-existence & Re-existence Concept](#)
Beyond The Horizon of Time

Pre-existence and re-existence in Buddhist perspective

“How can we live, turning a deaf ear, to the last dramatic questions? Where does the world come from? Where is it going? What is the supreme power of the cosmos? What is the essential meaning of life? We cannot breathe confined to a realm of secondary and intermediate themes. We need a comprehensive perspective, foreground and background; not maimed scenery, a horizon stripped of infinite distances.” wrote Jose Ortega Y Gasset, in his book, *Toward a Philosophy of History*.

Throughout human history, mankind has been interested in knowing about himself and the world he lives in, in terms of space as well as time. Today mankind has, to a great extent, discovered what lies beyond the farthest limits of his vision in space, with the aid of advanced electronic telescopes and other highly developed scientific instruments, together with his ever progressing mathematical skills. Regarding his knowledge of what lies beyond the horizon of time, however, there is very little to boast of. We know very little about, what happened in prehistory on the earth and much less in the universe; so is our knowledge about the future of these great masses of matter that we call the solar system, and the galaxies. In recent times, there has been much speculation about the origin and end of the earth and even of the universe. But all these efforts have been mostly imagination and conjecture.

The Past and the Future

What concerns us most in this book, however, is about the past and future of the human being. And what lies in the past, beyond the horizon of birth? What lies in the future, beyond the horizon of death? Mankind has been speculating about this all important question, from time immemorial. There are numerous myths and beliefs connected with this question in all primitive cultures. In fact, all religions contain some form of belief about what happened before birth, and what would happen after death.

As far as the modern scientist is concerned, however, he knows nothing and says nothing regarding what lies beyond these two horizons of time, though it is so important to the ordinary human being. In fact, the scientist would discard the question as baseless; for, it seems to be based on the assumption that there is a permanent soul in man with a past present and future, which the scientist does not accept.

Although everyone feels the presence of a “self” or soul within, the scientist points out that these feelings are nothing more than what they are – mere feelings. The reality of the soul cannot be proven scientifically, because no one has perceived it objectively, and therefore it is not acceptable to modern science. Hence the question of pre-existence and re-existence does not arise, for the scientist.

One might object to this, of course, because there has been much scientific investigation carried out by researchers regarding this subject and that many scientists believe in pre-existence and re-existence. The answer, unfortunately, is that scientific investigation has not proved these theories beyond

doubt, and that the belief of a scientist does not become a scientific fact, without scientific proof. For proper scientific investigation to be carried out, in this case, there must be reliable communication between two persons in two periods of time:

- (1) one present somewhere in the past, and
- (2) another present somewhere in the future. If they are both living in the present, then it is a matter of communication between two localities.

The purpose of this essay, however, is not so much to prove or to disprove this concept of rebirth, whatever the scientists may have done or said so far. Our purpose is to examine this concept of “pre-existence and re-existence” from a Buddhist perspective. But before we do so, it would be necessary to examine the meaning of this concept, briefly.

[Definition of Pre-existence and Re-existence](#)

Definition of Pre-existence & Re-existence

What we mean by the terms “pre-existence” and “re-existence,” is in short: “existence before birth,” and “existence after death,” respectively. Of course we take it for granted that “we exist in this world,” in the present. This is not a mere belief, to us; we regard it as a fact. To be conscious is to be conscious of “our” existence in “the world.” This “concept of existence” in time and space, seems to be built into the psychology of a human being. All societies, all cultures, all

individuals accept this “existence” to be a common human experience. Therefore, it is natural to question about the past of this existence: “Did we exist in the past, before birth?” We also question about the future of existence: “Will we exist in the future, after death?” Obviously, if we did not exist in the present, we would not be asking these questions. Modern existential philosophy is based on this assumption, though the Buddha questioned it.

Mankind in every culture has speculated about these questions. Many theories have been built around them in all ages. These concepts: “pre-existence” and “re-existence” have been given different names and understood in different ways in different cultures. They have been termed resurrection, re-incarnation, transmigration, rebirth, palingenesis, metempsychosis, punar-janman, punar-jathi, punabbhava, etc. etc.

[Resurrection](#)

Resurrection

Resurrection is a term referring to a concept that is exclusively Christian. It refers to a dead body coming back to life. An example is the resurrection of Jesus on the cross. Most Christians, however, believe that it was not the body but the soul that came back to life. According to the Gospels, however, it was the body of Christ that was resurrected, as it was lost on the third day and reappeared to the disciples later and showed the wounds on the hands. Christians also believe that the bodies of people will rise from the grave on judgement day. This is a belief which appears to assume that the soul and the body are one, or that the soul is within the body and inseparable from the body.

The belief that the soul is inseparable from the body was probably responsible for the ancient custom of preserving dead bodies in mummies and also of burying dead bodies. The custom of cremation is probably associated with the belief that the soul is separable from the body and that the burning facilitates separation. It seems that the story of Count Dracula is also based on the belief that the soul is inseparable from the body.

Some Christians believe that the discarnate spirit remains somewhere after death, and when Jesus comes at the end of the world on judgement day, they will be made to enter heaven, hell, limbo or purgatory accordingly. Other Christians do not think in terms of a soul but believe that the body dies and comes back to life on judgement day, which is called resurrection.

[Re-incarnation](#)

Re-incarnation

Re-incarnation is a Judeo-Christian term, even though traditionally, neither Jews nor Christians believe in reincarnation. The term reincarnation originates from the Judeo-Christian belief that at birth God inserts a spirit into a human body, which is called an incarnation. At death, which is called discarnation, the spirit is believed to separate from the body and remain as a discarnate spirit. The term “reincarnation” therefore means that the discarnate spirit re-enters a body. This is a Judeo-Christian interpretation of the Buddhist idea of “rebirth.” Although some Buddhists use this term re-incarnation in ignorance it is important for Buddhists not to use this term as it conveys wrong information.

Though re-incarnation is not an orthodox Judeo-Christian belief, some Jews and some Christians also believe in it, and when they do so, they place the belief within the Judeo-Christian frame work. They like to think that God is compassionate enough not to judge or punish a person for what the person did in one life. Instead God is supposed to allow a person several chances through reincarnation to purify the soul. Therefore every reincarnation is a purging of sins until finally when one is fully purified by purging all sins, then one is taken to heaven. This belief makes the human world become a purgatory, and this also dispenses with the idea of eternal suffering in hell. The re-incarnationists do not believe that a human being will be reincarnated as an animal, because they believe that animals do not have a soul.

Those who believe in reincarnation are called reincarnationists, but they are not Buddhists, nor are they Hindus. It is incorrect to use the term reincarnation when referring to the Buddhist belief in rebirth, because “rebirth” and “reincarnation” are not synonyms. They are two words with two different meanings. This is a common mistake made by negligent writers.

For Christians who believe in re-incarnation, however, the discarnate spirit re-enters a human body at birth. There may be several such human births, during which the soul goes through a gradual purification until it is fully purified, and enters heaven. In other words, the human world, to them, is the purgatory where the process of purgation takes place, through, several incarnations. Some even believe that the process of reincarnation has no end, as the purified spirits like Christ are also reincarnated from time to time in order to help purify others. The Reincarnationists are averse, however, to the belief that the human soul can enter animal bodies also. It is important to understand that Reincarnationists are not Buddhists or Hindus but are unorthodox Judeo-Christians.

Transmigration

Transmigration

Transmigration differs from reincarnation. Transmigration is a word used in Hinduism, and it is placed within the Hindu Samsaric framework. The Hindu believes in the soul, *karma*, and the cycle of transmigration (*samsara*). The Hindu does not believe that God puts a soul into the body at birth. Nor does he believe that the soul separates from the body at death and remains without a body as a discarnate spirit. The Hindu belief is that the soul transmigrates straight away into another body after death. This is transmigration. The Hindu also believes that the soul can even enter an animal body at death, where as the Reincarnationist does not believe so. The Hindu view is that this process of transmigration (*samsara*) of the soul continues, determined by *karma*. Karma is a natural law of punishment and reward for actions good and bad done during life. The purpose of the Hindu life is to put an end to this cycle of transmigration and be free from Karma, because it is so unpleasant. These sufferings of *samsara* and *karma* can be stopped only by purifying the soul through good behaviour and meditation. This purification does not happen automatically, or due to the transmigration alone, or even due to the power of God, but it happens due to a conscious human effort to purify the soul. When the soul is purified, it goes back to God, to whom it belongs, and where it came from. That is the end of the painful vortex of birth and death (*samsara*).

Metempsychosis

Metempsychosis

The term *Metempsychosis* (metem = change + psych = soul) is similar to the term "transmigration," which means that the soul changes or migrates from one body to another at death. This soul is believed to be able, even to enter animal bodies, and vice-versa.

Palingenesis

Palingenesis

Palingenesis (Palin = again + *genesis* = origination) is a term similar to re-birth, though often used in the same sense as metempsychosis, involving a soul. Punar-janman is also a term having a meaning similar to rebirth (*punar* = again + *janman* = birth) but often equated to metempsychosis that involves a soul. The term *punabbhava* meaning re-being (*puna* = again + *bhava* = being or existence) carries the same meaning as rebirth, though this term, like rebirth, is used in Buddhism with a special meaning.

Re-birth

Rebirth

"Rebirth," is a term used by the Buddhists in a very special sense. For the Buddhist, "rebirth" means "a new birth after death." It is the birth of a body and a mind, without a soul being involved. No "soul" leaves the body at death; no "soul" enters the new body at birth; yet the new body and mind is the result of the old body and mind. Buddhists do not believe in a soul. Therefore rebirth is not explained as the transmigration of a 'soul' from one body to another.

Philosophical Implications

Philosophical Implications

Though this concept of pre-existence is generally considered to be an exclusively Eastern concept which had no place in Western thought, it keeps frequently arising in the minds of Westerners. It is a frequent theme in plays and novels. Psychologists write theses on this subject and clergymen author books on it. Currently, a team of psychiatrists are investigating cases of supposed recollection of former lives. Western thinkers are beginning to consider this concept to be of momentous importance in giving meaning to their lives.

The well-known psychoanalyst, and past life recall therapist, Brian L. Weiss, MD says in his Book, *Through Time into Healing* (pages 40-41):

"I later discovered that in both Judaism and Christianity the roots of belief in reincarnation go very deep.

In Judaism, a fundamental belief in reincarnation, or gilgul, has existed for thousands of years. This belief had been a basic cornerstone of the Jewish faith until approximately 1800-1850, when the urge to modernize and to be accepted by the more scientific Western establishment transformed the Eastern European Jewish communities. ...

When I researched the History of Christianity, I discovered that early references to reincarnation in the New Testament had been deleted in the fourth century by Emperor Constantine when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. Apparently, the emperor had felt that the concept of reincarnation was threatening to the stability of the empire. Citizens who believed that they would have another chance to live might be less obedient and law abiding than those who believed in a single Judgment Day for all."

Westerners, however, seem to think that underlying this concept is the concept of immortality, which they feel, is urgently needed in order to make their lives worthwhile in the face of the certainty of death. W. McNeil Dixon, the British philosopher and educator said in his *Gifford Lectures* (1935-1937):

"The story of humanity becomes the story of a long procession of sufferers, for whose suffering no justification is offered....To live is, by universal consent, to travel a rough road. And how can a rough road which leads nowhere be worth the travelling.. Beyond all peradventure, it is the thought that death appears to proclaim, the thought of frustration.... Give assurance that it is not so, and the scene is changed. The sky brightens, the door is left open for unimagined possibilities, and things begin to fall into an intelligible pattern...."

Immortality is a word which stands for the stability or pursuance of that unique and precious quality we discuss in the soul....Of all doctrines of a future life, palingenesis or rebirth, which carries with it the idea of the pre-existence, is by far the most ancient and most widely held, 'the only system to which,' as said Hume, 'philosophy can hearten.'"

Edward Arnold comments on Dixon, in his *The Human Situation* – (London: Edward Arnold, 1937 and 1957):

These words of Dixon clearly describe the typical attitude of the modern Westerner, interested in re-incarnation as a belief. The cause of this attitude seems to be the disturbance of the religious complacency of the Westerner owing to the challenge of modern science, in the denial of the soul. For, Dixon says:

"You have heard of this curious doctrine, of this psychology which rejects the psyche and retains only the 'ology'. Where we imagined the – 'I' or 'self' to be, there is only, they tell us, a series of fleeting impressions, sensations, fancies, pains, and pleasures, '... no entity over and above them that, as centre or subject, thinks, feels or desires. It is then a mirage or hallucination, this notion of 'self.'... On every side today you meet with an exaltation of the 'intellect' at the expense of the 'spirit.' You may trust, it is said, you're 'thoughts,' but not your 'aspirations.'... "

(Dixon - Human Situation)

The challenge of modern science, of the notion of the eternal soul, of Western religion and culture, is obviously the reason for turning East to re-incarnation, in search of a defence of the soul. J. Paul Williams, Chairman of the Department of Religion at Mt. Holyoke College is even more explicit, in an article in the Yale Review:

"The idea that human beings are just bodies is one phase of the notion that nothing exists but 'matter,' that 'spirit' is non-existent, that 'mind' is but 'matter' in motion. This position is one that scientists have expounded dogmatically. Because of the prestige of these men, many people have jumped to the conclusion that anyone who is thoroughly abreast of modern thought will discard faith in a 'soul.' ..."

(Yale Review - Spring 1945)

Why the belief in a soul is so important for the belief in an after life, is explained by Paul Williams in the same article:

“The argument for the future life which logically precedes all others is the simple one that if man is a soul, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he survives death. If man is simply a body, a physio-chemical reaction, and nothing more, it is obvious that he does not live again as such a body ”

(Yale Review - Spring 1945)

Paul Williams even presents the common argument in favour of the soul theory:

There are two ways to prove a thing. One is to show how it follows logically from other things that (are true). The other is just to point and say, "There it is "

I am among those who feel that they must believe in souls simply because they experience them. ”

In turning to re-incarnation for emotional support, in face of the challenge of science, they seek strength in Eastern religion.

Paul Williams says again:

“One's emotional orientation to the problem of the future life is materially advanced when one realizes that the two great religions of the East - Hinduism and Buddhism - assume that the future life is a fact. It is not "wishful thinking" from the Hindu or Buddhist point of view to expect to live again; rather it is stark realism. But it would be "wishful thinking" from their point of view really to believe that religion has found a way to get off the "wheel of life"....

(Yale Review - Spring 1945)

[Theravada Concepts](#)

Theravada Concepts

In his struggle to find support for a belief in immortality, the Westerner in confusion rejects the Theravada or Southern Buddhist concept of rebirth without a soul; little knowing that it is the only rational solution to the problem. F.L. Woodward says in the commentary to his translation of *Dhammapada*:

"The Southern version, briefly, is that at death a man's tendencies and traits of character are (by a chain reaction of cause and effect) reborn in some other person or individual, but without any connecting link of continuing egoity. The latter is the view adopted by Edmond Holmes: "The question which we have to ask ourselves with regard to the Buddhist conception is a simple one: "Is the identity between me and the inheritor of my Karma. as real as the identity between the me of today and the me 20 years hence? ..." If it is not as real, the doctrine of re- incarnation is pure nonsense. "Holmes continues, showing that the doctrine of Karma, the key teaching of Buddhism, becomes almost senseless when divorced from the idea of a re-incarnating ego."

Dhammapada - F. L. Woodward, Cunningham Press L.A. 1955)

The problem of the Westerner here is the challenge by science of his belief in an immortal soul which leaves an emotional but irrational desire for a concept of continuity after death. In this situation, the Theravada position would be the real solution to his problem; instead of an emotional plunge into an irrational defence of the “soul.” Only the Theravada position provides a rational answer to the challenge of science, in showing that the continuity of life after death is possible without an everlasting soul.

[Rational Approach](#)

A Rational Approach

Theravadins accept the scientist's position that the 'soul' is only an illusion. But they also maintain that the absence of a soul does not end life after death. The “mental process” which is mistaken to be the “soul” can continue even beyond death resulting in another life. The illusion of soul, however, can be maintained even after death, and life after life, until it is stopped through a conscious psychological process. As long as this illusion is maintained, there will be the notion of identity between the doer of the deed and the reaper of its results in a future life. This identity will remain just as there is the notion of identity between the “me” that is born, the “me” that grows up to be a youth, and the “me” that becomes an old person that dies.

Even when the illusion of “soul” or “self” disappears intellectually, the emotional feeling of identity does not disappear with it. What disappears is only the intellectual notion of a permanent entity, called the 'soul' or 'self.' The identity that remains is a feeling that a “I” as a person or “self” continues within this life, as well as from life to life. When one becomes fully conscious of this unconscious experience of a self, one does not personalize the experience any more, which forms the illusion of “self,” but understands the experience to be impersonal, and is aware of the continuity of the impersonal experience. This full awareness of the illusion of “self” consciously, stops the unconscious emotional feeling of “self,” and also the continuity of life after death.

This continuity of life after death without a soul can be understood easily today due to the advancement of modern science. Today even children are familiar with action at a distance, when they drive toy vehicles through remote control. A driver of a motor vehicle can open a gate by merely pressing a button while in the vehicle. One can even lock a car, unlock, or even start a car from a distance. Today we are familiar with radio and television transmission. Understanding how rebirth takes place is simple for one familiar with modern scientific phenomena. Rebirth also works through wave motion like TV, or radio.

Even this rational explanation of rebirth without a soul does not, of course, satisfy one who is craving for a notion of “self” and a permanent existence in the face of the awareness of death.

The Psychological Problem **The Psychological Problem**

The problem here then is psychological rather than philosophical or scientific. The problem is the anxiety that all beings experience in the face of death. All living things including plants are struggling to exist. Yet the struggle is a failure because death supervenes. The individual always dies. What continues is only the race or species in the form of progeny. When we come to conscious beings, especially the human being, we find that the problem is not merely a physical one but it is also psychological. Fortunately, however, it is also the human being who ultimately finds the solution to the problem, by developing one’s consciousness. This means, becoming conscious of the problem, its cause, its end, and the way to its end.

The intelligent human being can realize that we are biological organisms that make a mistake in struggling to exist, although it is not consciously done by plants or animals other than the human being. It is the human being that can understand that we are seeking permanence in an impermanent world, and that this effort is futile, frustrating, painful and unrealistic. It is only by stopping the struggle to exist as an individual that peace could be attained. In other words, what we should seek is not immortality but freedom from the unrealistic desire for immortality, which clashes with the reality of impermanence and death. This way, one can accept death, not with a grin but with a smile of understanding, and peaceful tranquility.

In fact, what we mistakenly thought as challenging our very being or existence, was actually a challenge to our false notions and aspirations, which were producing the anxiety or suffering. If God is reality, then the acceptance of the reality of death and impermanence is the acceptance of God. It is the emotional feeling of “self” that comes in conflict with reality and creates the suffering or insecurity of life. Here we might recall the Gospel saying, "One who loses his “self” for my sake shall find it." Science, then, is not seen as our foe but as our friend. It is this original form of Buddhism, or Proto Buddhism, alone that can, not only reconcile science with religion, but also see the unity in the diversity of religion.

This Buddhist stand point is confirmed by Sigmund Freud in "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death:

"To anyone who listened to us (in the West) we were prepared to maintain that death was the necessary outcome of life. ... In reality, however, we. ... showed an unmistakable tendency to put death on one side, to eliminate it from life. but this attitude. towards death has a powerful effect on our lives. Life is impoverished. ...

When primeval man saw someone who belongs to him die, ... then, in his pain, he was forced to learn that oneself can die too, and the whole being revolted against this admission. So he devised a compromise. the conception of a life continuing after death. ... After this, it was no more than consistent to extend life backwards into the past, to form the notions of earlier existences, of the transmigration of souls and of re-incarnation, all for the purpose of depriving death of its meaning as the termination of life."

(Complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud)

[Scientific Proof of Rebirth](#)

Scientific Proof of Rebirth

Many efforts have been made by writers and scientists to prove rationally and scientifically that rebirth is a fact. But all such efforts have not been able to conclusively prove rebirth to the satisfaction of all scientists. Yet this does not make rebirth less tenable.

The basis of the Buddhist belief is not merely the authority of sacred texts or tradition. It is based on a kind of empirical evidence. It is based on the experience of seers who have developed super memories and clairvoyance. The Buddha states in the Samaññapala Sutta:

This, O King, is the immediate fruit of the life of a recluse. ... With heart thus serene, made pure, he directs and bends down his mind to the knowledge of the memory of his previous lives. He recalls to mind various lives in days gone by - one birth, two, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, hundred, thousand, hundred thousand births, through many an aeon of devolution, many an aeon of evolution."

"In such a place such was my name, such was my experience of discomfort or ease, and such was the limit of my life. When I passed away from that state, I took form again in such a place. ... Thus does he recall,.. in all their details and in all their modes.

"Just, O King, as if a man were to go from his own village to another village, and from that to another, and from that, one should return home. Then he would know: From my own village I came to that other one. There I stood in such and such a way, sat thus, spoke thus, and held my peace thus. Thence I came to that other village etc.

"This, O King, is an immediate fruit of the life of a recluse....

"With his heart thus serene and made pure.. he directs and bends down his mind to the fall and rise of beings. With the pure heavenly eye, surpassing that of men, he sees beings as they pass away from one form of existence and take shape in another: he recognises the mean and the noble. the happy and the wretched, passing away according to their deeds....

Just, O King, as if there were a house with an upper terrace on it, in the midst of a place where four roads meet, and a man standing thereon, and with eyes to see, should watch men entering a house, and coming forth out of it, and walking hither and thither along the street, and seated in the square in the midst.

This, O King, is an immediate fruit of a life of a recluse. "
(Dialogues of the Buddha, Part 1, Page 90)

This is how, to a Buddhist, rebirth is an observable fact not different from a scientific observation, using a special device or instrument. The Buddhist actually uses his own mind, as his instrument to verify the concept of rebirth. Just as a scientist uses his well made perfected microscope, to examine bacteria and viruses, the Buddhist uses his well developed purified and perfected mind to examine the past, present, and future, in order to understand whether rebirth is a fact or fallacy.

For the Buddhist the concept of rebirth is not an escape from death, however. It is rather a meeting of death, or continuity of death, from life to life, which is a disaster (*dukkha jathi punappunam*). This means the aim of the Buddhist is to put an end to rebirth. This is done, not by seeking eternal life in Heaven, but by giving up the delusion of existence.

[The Mechanics of Rebirth](#)

The Mechanics of Rebirth

The mechanics of the process of rebirth without a soul was difficult to explain to people during the time of the Buddha. But with the advancement of scientific knowledge today it would not be such a formidable task. Modern people are quite familiar with transference of activity through waves, where no entity as such travels. They are familiar with radio and television transmission through electro-magnetic waves. It should be quite easy for them to understand rebirth as a process of transmission of activity rather than as the transmigration of an entity called soul. It is well known to scientists that the human mind is an activity rather than an entity. So rebirth is merely the transmission of an activity.

We know that a song is but the vibration of the vocal cords of the singer, which sets the air vibrating, which in turn sets the diaphragm in the microphone vibrating, which sets an electric current vibrating along a wire, which again sets an electro-

magnetic wave vibrating in ether, which in turn vibrates a current in the receiver, which sets the air vibrating, which sets the ear drum of the listener vibrating, which sends a vibrating nerve impulses along the auditory nerve, which begins a vibration in the brain, which produces the sensation of hearing a song. The song was not an entity that passed from one place to another but an activity that was transmitted.

In the same way, a person is not an entity that passes from one life to another, but an activity that is transmitted from one life to another, just like radio or television transmission.

We know, today, that the brain and nervous system functions, electrically. Emotional excitement is electrical too, and it is this emotional energy that motivates action. Motivating emotional energy is what is called "Tanha" (urge) which Sigmund Freud saw as the "libido." It is this "Tanha" which is responsible for rebirth and which provides the energy for transmission. This energy, like electricity, has positive and negative aspects which are manifested in the form of "lobha" (attraction) and "dosa" (repulsion). What is called "Karma" is the excitement (*cetana*) of emotion in the form of "lobha" and "dosa" along with "moha" (delusion).

The more often an emotion is excited, the stronger it becomes and the easier it becomes to repeat. Emotions frequently repeated crystallize into habits and habits continued amalgamate into character. It is character which determines our destiny, both here and hereafter.

Rebirth, therefore, to a Buddhist, is not just a discarnate spirit taking another human or animal body. Every re-existence is a rebirth, to him. Even coming into existence in heaven would be considered a rebirth by the Buddhist, though from a Western religious stand point, it would be the entrance of the soul to Heaven.

There are several realms of existence (*bhava*) in which a being could be born, according to Buddhism. Broadly speaking, they are of three kinds: Sensual Existence (*kama bhava*), Imagery Existence (*rupa bhava*) and Imageless Existence (*arupa bhava*).

Sensual realms are again of three kinds; those where there is only the painful sensation, called the Realms of no gain (*Niraya*); those where there is a mixture of pleasure and pain, which are four in number: Human (*manussa*), Animals (*tiracchana*), the Spirits (*peta*), and Titans (*asura*). The animals, spirits, titans, and the realms of no gain are together called the four realms of ill-gain (*apayas*). The third kind of sensual realm is the realm of pleasure only. There are six such worlds called the worlds of angels (*devaloka*).

The imagery worlds are worlds where extremely subtle forms of matter, or of energy, are present, and where some beings have even radiant bodies. These beings do not experience pleasures but they are happy. They are beaming with happiness, but only inner happiness derived from purity and tranquillity of mind. Pleasure is only a sensation derived from the stimulation of the senses by the environment, while happiness is an undisturbed peaceful and tranquil state of the mind. Youth delight in sensations and excitement, but the mature find satisfaction in tranquillity and peace. This means happiness is more mature.

The imageless worlds are free from images whatever, but there is either perception of infinity of space, infinity of cognition, the awareness of complete absence, or the uncertain awareness of neither sensation nor no sensation; the latter being the most refined state of existence.

None of these spheres of existence are permanent, however, though the life span may be very long. Entry into any such form of existence is called a rebirth, and the departure from that state is called death.

Beings travel from life to life, while the ultimate beginning or the ultimate end is normally inconceivable. The direction of travel, however, is determined by "Karma," the emotions (*cetana*) that one lives with. The emotional state at the moment of death is what, determines where a person is reborn.

At death, the emotional energy is released, in the form of a wave, which has a certain frequency and wavelength. This frequency could be high in a person who is highly tensed and emotionally excited. Such high frequency waves are received in the worlds of ill-gain. Relatively low frequency waves are received in the human world and pleasure worlds. Lower levels of frequency are received in the Imagery Realms and even lower in the Imageless Realms. The lowest frequency being received in the Realms of uncertainty where there is neither presence nor absence of sensation.

Very rarely does a being enter these highest refined Realms. The great majority stagnate around the lower realms of pain and suffering. The progress in this tour of the worlds is not a matter of constant evolution, forever ascending the ladder with never a regression. It is rather an up and down, snakes and ladders journey, where there are more snakes than ladders. Just as there are more poor people in the world than the rich, and there are more criminals than saints, there are more beings that are descending the spiritual ladder than there are beings ascending it. An observation of the people we meet in life will make this quite clear. The Buddha once took some sand into his nails and said "*Just as there is more sand in the Ganges than in my nails, there are more beings born in the lower spheres than in the higher spheres of existence.*" So was the opinion of Jesus when he said "*narrow is the gate to Heaven and wide is the gate to Hell.*" But, of course, the re-incarnationists like to think of progression rather than regression:

"In the Orient, the belief in regression of human souls to subhuman levels is prevalent. The Western re-incarnationist asks: is it conceivable that a human being with his remarkable mental power could be 'encased' in an insect or bird?"

"Would not the mere contact cause instant dis-integration, just as high voltage power shatters a lamp?"

(Re-incarnation in World Thought.

Edited by Joseph Head and S.L Cranston – Julian Press. N.Y.)

In any case, the Theravada Buddhist position is that because of this unhappy state of affairs, this continuous tour of beings from life to life, called 'Samsara', directed by Karma, is not a pleasant state of existence. Samsara is not immortality as the re-incarnationists like to think. It is only a continuation of a process of perpetual death. Therefore, the aim of the Buddhist is to bring this "unpleasant tour" (samsara) to an end.

This "tour" can be brought to an end, not by seeking eternal life in an unknown Heaven, but only by freeing the mind of the delusion of existence; by realizing that there is no being or person that does the tour. What continues is not an entity or soul but only a process of activity. When one is free of the delusion of "personal existence or being," the painful struggle for existence and the urge to exist stops, as it has no meaning or benefit in continuing this painful struggle. This brings the suffering here and now, as well as here after, to an end. This is Nirvana, the Summum Bonum of Buddhism. The tour stops because the energy that keeps the tour going, which is in the urge to exist, has now stopped.

Suffering is the frustration of the desire to exist permanently in an impermanent world. When one realises that the urge to exist is unrealistic and results only in suffering, because it clashes with the reality of impermanence and death, the urge to exist stops.

[Is the Belief in Rebirth Necessary](#)

Is The Belief in Rebirth Necessary?

One might conclude from what has been said that rebirth is an essential dogma of Buddhism and that Buddhists should always believe in rebirth. In fact, many, Buddhists believe that karma and rebirth forms the basis of Buddhist practice and that if rebirth is proven false, the Buddhist practice loses its meaning and Buddhism as an institution begins to break down. Fortunately this is not the case.

If we examine the Theravada Pali Nikayas, we find in the Apannaka Sutta and elsewhere, that "Kamma" and "Rebirth" are considered to be good, wholesome and harmonious views. They are considered good because they lead to the doing of good and the living of the good life.

"As to this, householders, of those recluses and brahmins who speak thus. There is no fruit or ripening of deeds well done or ill done; there is not this world, there is not a world beyond.... " This is to be expected of them: Having laid aside these three good things: right conduct of body, right conduct of speech, right conduct of thought, and taking up these three bad things: wrong conduct of body, wrong conduct of speech, wrong conduct of thought, they practise them. What is the reason for this? It is that these worthy recluses and brahmins do not see the peril in wrong things, the vanity, the defilement, nor the advantage, allied to purity, of renouncing them for the good things."

(Apannaka Sutta M.S. II 71) P.T.S.

Although "Kamma" and "Rebirth" as views motivates one to do good, that is not the only reason or the best reason, accordingly to the - Nikayas, for leading a good life. "Kamma and Rebirth ethics" is "punishment and reward ethics" which is immature and self centred. The more mature form of ethics is based on a consideration for others and an interest in others welfare and happiness:

*"All beings tremble at punishment
To all beings life is dear
Comparing others with oneself
Hurt not, nor destroy"*

(Dhammapada)

This idea is further elaborated in the Sutras and has been termed the "self reflexive" method of teaching (*attupanaikam Dhammapariyayam*). This is also the Christian Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." This mature ethic is based on "Metta" or universal benevolence, analogous to Christian love. "Love thy neighbour as thy self"; though 'metta' is broader in scope, in being extended to all beings: "May all beings be well and happy" (*sabbe satta bhavantu sukhi tatta*).

Concept of Good and Evil **Concept of Good and Evil**

The Buddhist definition of "good" and "evil" is based on this consideration for others as well as oneself:

*"But what, Your Reverence, is good conduct?
Whatever conduct, Sire, that is faultless
What, Your Reverence, is faultless conduct?
Whatever, Sire, that is harmless
What, Your Reverence, is harmless?
Whatever, Sire, is not ill in effect
What, Your Reverence, is not ill in effect?
Whatever conduct, Sire, is not conducive to the ill-fare of oneself, ill-fare of others or ill-fare of both"*
(Bahitika Sutta M.S. II, 299)

The 'Kalama Sutta' makes it clear that a person who lives by this mature Buddhist ethic, does not have to worry about the problem of an after life.

"By that Aryan disciple whose heart is thus freed from enmity, free from oppression, untainted and made pure, by such in this very life four comforts are attained, thus:

- 1) *'If there is a world beyond... I shall be reborn in the happy lot. '*
- 2) *'If, however, there is no world beyond..... in this very life do I hold myself free from enmity and oppression, griefless, and well.....*
- 3) *Though, as a result of action, ill be done by me, yet do I plan no ill to anyone...*
- 4) *If as a result of action, no ill be done by me, then in both ways do I behold myself utterly pure.*
(G.S. I, 127)

Therefore, though 'Kamma and rebirth' is considered a good view and a factual view in Buddhism, it is neither an essential dogma of Buddhism nor is Buddhist ethics based on this belief. Very few writers on Buddhism have made this point clear. Therefore, it is very important to emphasise this. The point that needs recognition here is that Buddhism is a 'Kamma Vada' (speaks of action) rather than a 'Vipaka Vada' (speaks of results). This point is clear from the dialogue between the Buddha and Upali, the follower of the Jains.

"Ven. Gotama, it is not the custom of Nataputta the Jain to lay down 'deed, deed' (kamma, kamma); Ven. Gotama, it is the custom of Nataputta the Jain to lay down 'penalty, penalty' (danda, danda).....

"Upali, it is not the custom of a Tathagata to lay down 'penalty, penalty'; Upali, it is the custom for a Tathagata to lay down 'deed, deed' "
(Upali Sutta, M.S. II 36)

Nigantha Nataputta, the founder of Jainism, was a contemporary of the Buddha. Here, it is Jainism that emphasizes the result of deeds in the form of punishment and reward. Buddhism, on the other hand, evaluates the goodness of the action by itself irrespective of its results in the future, by considering how it affects oneself as well as others, here and now, The 'Kalama Sutta' explains this clearly:

"Now what think ye, Kalamas? When greed arises within a man, does it arise to his profit or to his loss?" "To his loss, Lord."

"Now, Kalamas, does not this man, thus become greedy, being overcome by greed and losing control of mind, - does he not kill a living creature, take what is not given, go after another's wife, lies and leads another into such a state as causes his loss and sorrow for a long time?" He does, Lord."
(Kalama Sutta, G.S. I, 127)

Here, another point becomes clear in addition to the emphasis on the goodness or evilness of the deed by itself. There is also the emphasis on the mental state that, motivates the action. This fact is brought out dramatically in the 'Upali Sutta' quoted above.

"Nataputta, the Jain lays down that penalty of body is the more blamable. penalty of speech is not like it, penalty of mind is not like it.... "

"Upali,... I lay down that deed of mind is the more blamable. deed of body is not like it, deed of speech is not like it."
(Upali Sutta, M.S. II, 37)

This contrast between the Jain emphasis on results and on the physical act, and the Buddhist emphasis on the deed and mental or emotional state, is clearly explained in several other places in the Nikayas. Therefore, the Buddhist practice is not based on the idea of "Kamma, Rebirth and Samsara"; rather, it is Jainism and other such religions that do so.

What this means is that the emphasis of the Buddha is not on the circumstances but on the attitude to circumstances. "Punishment and reward" refers to the circumstances one is in, and reacting to the circumstances by lamenting or being delighted about them. Action or kamma refers to one's attitude to the circumstance, whether good or bad. If one is in bad circumstances, and one responds to it in the proper way, it can be turned into a profitable circumstance, and be happy as a result. A good example is the life of Abraham Lincoln. Another is the life of Nicky the man who was born without hands or legs, who became a millionaire

[Renunciation Not Based on Rebirth](#)

Renunciation not based on Rebirth

Some may agree that the good life of the Buddhist is not based on the idea of rebirth, but when a Buddhist renounces, however, he does so either to find happiness in the next world or to solve the Samsaric problem of stopping the continuation of rebirth.

This, however, is not found to be the case when we examine Sutras like, Potaliya Sutta, Magandiya Sutta, Mahadukkhandanda Sutta, Ariya Pariyesana Sutta and many others. The reasons for renunciation are to be found here and now. There is a Sutta in the Samyutta Nikaya where Mara (Satan) assuming the shape of a Brahmin... drew near to the bhikkhus and said:

"Your Reverences are too young to have left the world.... You are in your early prime now. Have the fun that belongs to natural desires. Enjoy, gentlemen, the pleasures of youth. Do not abandon the present pleasures, and run after pleasures of the future, which involves time."

"Nay, brahmin, we have not abandoned the things of this life to run after matters involving time. It is 'matters of time' brahmin, that we have abandoned, who are running after things of this life. Yea, brahmin, natural desires are 'matters of time,' so hath the Exalted One said, full of sorrow and despair; that way lies abundant disaster. But this doctrine is concerned with 'things of this life,' and is not a 'matter of time'; it bids a man to come and behold, it directs him inward, and could be known by the wise, as a personal experience."
(K.S. I, 147)

The above passage clearly explains, as does several other Sutras, that renunciation does not involve the need for a belief in a next life.

[Belief in Rebirth is a Hindrance](#)

Belief in Rebirth is a Hindrance

We might even venture, at this point, to state that the belief in rebirth can even be a hindrance to one's progress in enlightenment. This is because, to think of rebirth and samsara is to get entangled in the concept of time, and to do so is to affirm the belief in the continuity of an entity, into the past, present, and future; which is the eternalist stand point, experienced as an everlasting "self" that exists in time. If, on the other hand, we deny the continuity of an entity in time, we get caught up in the present and say: "Then there is no rebirth after my death," which is the annihilationist position. Thus the concept "there is a soul" leads to the eternalist stand-point and the concept "there is no soul", leads to the annihilationist position.

This was what happened to Vacchagotta when he came to ask the Buddha:

"Is there a "self" (attattati)?"

The Buddha became silent.

"Is there no self (nattattati)?"

The Buddha became silent

"Is there neither self nor no self?"

The Buddha became silent.

"Is there both self and no self?"

The Buddha became silent.

So Vacchagotta got up and walked away.

Then Ananda, the Buddha's disciple asked why He was silent.

The Buddha replied:

"If I said there is a self, I would be in the eternalist position.

If I said there is no self, I would be in the annihilationist position.

I have always said 'all experience is impersonal' (sabbe dhamma anatta)

If I tried to explain this, he will misunderstand it and think 'When I die I will not be born again.' Therefore I remained silent."

(SN IV 400)

The Sabbasava Sutta in the Majjhima Nikaya explains clearly how one's progress is hindered through thinking in terms of rebirth:

"The uninstructed normal person, unskilled in the Dhamma...thinks: "did I exist in the past? Did I not exist in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, to what did I change in the past? Will I exist in the future? Will I not exist in the future? What will I be in the future" How will I be in the future? Having been what, to what will I change in the future?" He is also doubtful about the present, and thinks... "am I existing now, am I not existing now? What am I? How am I? From where has this existence come? Where will this existence go?" To one who thinks in these ways, one of six views arise:

1) "I have a 'self'..."

2) "I have no self"..."

3) "By self I am aware of self"..."

4) "By self I am aware of not self"..."

5) "By not self I am aware of self"..."

6) "It is this self that speaks, that feels and knows, that experiences now here, now there, the fruition of deeds that are good or that are bad, it is this self that is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change, that will stand firm unto the eternal."

This, monks, is called going to views, holding views, the wilderness of views, the scuffling of views, the fetter of views.

Fettered by this fetter of views, monks, the uninstructed normal person is not set free from births, from old age, from death, from grief, from lamentation, from pain, from sorrow, from despair, he is not free from suffering I say.

But the instructed disciples of the pure ones think thus: "This is suffering, this is the origin of suffering, this is the end of suffering, and this is the way to end suffering." Because he thinks deterministically thus, the three fetters decline:

personality perspective, cognitive dissonance, heteronomous morality.

(Sabbasava Sutta, M.S. I, 10 - 13)

Genuine Buddhism, therefore, is not 'Kamma and Rebirth Buddhism'. Genuine Buddhism which is independent of time (akalika), speaks not about rebirth but about suffering (dukkha) and its cessation here and now:

"One thing alone do I teach, monks, suffering and the cessation of suffering."

(Anguttara Nikaya)

Suffering, according to Buddhism, is 'existence' itself (*bhava*). Where ever there is existence', there is also birth and death! Birth and death are two ends of the same stick, 'existence'. Therefore, 'eternal existence' is impossible. We cannot remove 'death' and have 'existence' only. Death is not something separate from existence but a part of existence. Existence

has a beginning and an end; birth is the beginning, and death is the end; in between is change, which is aging. Life is a dynamic changing process and not a static entity. Because existence is a static concept, it cannot be used to refer to the ever changing dynamic process called life. This means “existence” is a delusion. It is not a rational concept but “an emotional sentiment.” This is why the Buddha pointed out that this sentiment “existence of a self” is the cause of all suffering. Therefore it should be eliminated.

To be free from 'death' we have to be free from the notion of existence. Yet to be free from the notion of 'existence' is not to stop existing. To be free of the notion of existence we have to realise that existence, is only an “an emotional sentiment,” and not a rational concept. This means existence is not a reality. If existence is not a reality, then can death be a reality. By understanding “existence” in the proper way, we gain freedom of existence, 'birth' and 'death'. This is *Nibbana* the cessation of all suffering.

Therefore, “pre-existence” and “re-existence,” from the Buddhist perspective, is based on “existence now.” “Existence now” is based on an “experience,” which is subjective (mind) and objective (matter). Existence therefore is an empirical fact, but not an experiential reality. If one clings to the concept of “existence,” “pre-existence,” or “re-existence” one suffers. To be free of death and suffering, one has to recognize that “existence” is an experience and not an “existence” which “dies.” Therefore the Buddhist becomes free from suffering by recognizing that existence is only an “experience,” and not an “existence” that “dies.” This means there is no death if there is no existence. This is not a play on words, but a paradigm shift. It is a shift from existence to experience. This cannot be done until we become free of self-centred emotions that blind us to reality and create the notion of “self,” which is only a sentiment, but not a rational truth.

It is quite clear that by playing with this concept of 'Kamma and Rebirth' we might more than burn our fingers, by getting entangled in, views about the 'soul' and losing our way to freedom from suffering. 'Kamma and Rebirth' therefore, can be a dangerous concept if mishandled.

[Conclusion](#)

Conclusion

In conclusion, let us recall that this concept of pre-existence and re-existence though accepted in Buddhism as an empirical fact, observable by developed minds, and also regarded in Buddhism as a wholesome view that encourages good living, it is not an essential dogma of Buddhism; nor is it the basis of Buddhist ethics, nor even the basis of the life of renunciation. In fact, this belief is a hindrance to enlightenment. Therefore, it is wiser not to be dogmatic about it. Genuine Buddhism which is independent of time (*akalika*) focuses only on suffering (*dukkha*) and its cessation here and now.

“One thing alone do I teach, monks, suffering and the cessation of suffering.”
(Anguttara Nikaya)

The Buddha sums up his teaching about existence, both pre-existence and re-existence, and even present existence, in the Sabbasava Sutta of the Majjima Nikaya:

O disciples, an uneducated normal individual who is quite ignorant of supernormal individuals, and who is unfamiliar and unskilled in the supernormal philosophy and practice, pays unwise attention to what is inappropriate, but does not pay wise attention to what is appropriate. His unwise attention is as follows:

“Did I exist in the past, or did I not? If I existed, how did I exist in the past? From what form to what form did I change in the past? Will I exist in the future, or will I not? If I will exist in the future, how will I exist, or what will I be in the future? From what form to what form will I change in the future? He would even be concerned about the present. Do I exist now, or do I not? If I exist now, how do I exist? What am I? Where did I come from? Where will I go?”

When he attends unwisely in this way, one of six views arises in him:

1. I exist as a self
2. I do not exist as a self
3. The self perceives the self
4. The self perceives no self
5. The no self perceives the self
6. It is this 'self' that thinks, speaks, acts, and experiences the consequences of good and bad deeds. This 'self' is permanent, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and it will endure as long as eternity.

This, O disciples, is the thicket of views, the wilderness of views, the distortion of views, the confusion of views, the fetter of views. Fettered by this fetter of views, the uneducated, normal individual is not freed from birth, aging, and death; from grief, lamentation, pain, distress, and exhaustion; he is not freed from the insecurity of life, I say.

O disciples, an educated individual who is cognizant of the supernormal ones, and is conversant with the supernormal philosophy and practice pays wise attention to what is appropriate, and does not pay unwise attention to what is inappropriate. His wise attention is as follows:

1. He focuses attention on the insecurity of life.
2. He focuses attention on the cause of the insecurity
3. He focuses attention on the end of the insecurity of life
4. He focuses attention on the way to end the insecurity of life

When he attends wisely in this way, three fetters that bind him to existence are eliminated in him.

1. Personality perspective, (*sakkaya ditthi*)
2. Cognitive dissonance, (*vicikicca*)
3. Heteronomous morality, (*silabbata paramasa*)

This way one reaches the first level of the process of awakening, from the dream of existence, which is called “Stream Entrance” (*sotapanna*); the stream being the Supernormal Eightfold Way, which leads to the cessation of the insecurity of life.

This *Sabbasava Sutta* points out very clearly that thinking about karma and rebirth can become an obstacle to progress on the spiritual path, as taught by the Buddha. This seems to be the original Buddhist perspective on the concept of pre-existence and re-existence.

An unanswered question still remains, however, which is, “How does paying attention to the problem of the insecurity of life eliminate the notion of ‘self’?” The answer is that this happens only when one begins to understand that the “notion of self” is not a rational concept, but an emotional feeling, and that this emotional feeling is the cause of the insecurity of life.

What is Vesak?

Vesak is a religious monument of great significance to the devotees. Most monuments are located in the dimension of space, and on the earth. Pilgrims visit them in large numbers, even from distant lands, because they inspire them, elevate their spirits, and remind them of the teachings of their religion.

Vesak is such a monument, but it is one located in the dimension of time. Pilgrims do not go to it. It comes to them seasonally, like summer, winter or the rain. Vesak visits them during the month of May, with the waxing of the moon, and inspires, elevates, and enlightens them about the facts of life.

Vesak is comparable to the Christmas of the Christians; yet it is not exactly analogous to it. For the Buddhists, it is not a season for merriment such as eating, drinking, singing and dancing. It is, for the Buddhists, a season for serious religious observances, pilgrimages and meditation retreats.

Vesak is a time when all Buddhists become rejuvenated by reflecting on the Buddha, his wisdom, and his immense love for all beings. Throughout the month of May, and especially on the full moon day of May, they begin to express the glory of the Buddha and his enlightening message to the world, through vivid visual displays and solemn devotional ceremonies that mesmerize, captivate, and fascinate everyone. All those who come to witness this ostentatious display, begin to see the picturesque scenery created by the exquisite Vesak decorations, and hear the sonorous sounds of songs, sermons, and rhythmic chants constantly reaching their ears from loud speakers, carols, pageants and pandols. They also enjoy the sweet smelling perfumes of fragrant flowers and incense that enter their faithfully receptive noses. They even begin to taste Vesak from the free food fares (*dansal*) that are given out of charity to all comers in friendly fellowship, and they also touch the beautiful resplendent creations of Vesak with their own hands. Everyone absorbs and experiences the magnificent grandeur and majesty of the Buddha and his teachings through all their senses. Thus Vesak is a magnificent ceremonial experience for all visitors and participants, because it tantalizes them through the grandeur of Vesak by catering to all the six senses.

[A Different Reality](#)

A different reality

During Vesak, Buddhists are reminded of the reality revealed by the Buddha, the reality to which when one awakens, transforms one's personality from a self-centered, evil, unhappy, and unwise state, into a selfless, good, happy, and wise one. This is the Buddhist conversion, which is not a mere enlistment, achieved through coercion, compulsion, persuasion or bribery; nor is it a ceremonial religious endowment; but an inner psychological transformation, achieved through "awakening from the 'dream of existence,' which begins with an intellectual enlightenment or paradigm shift, and ends in a spiritual Awakening," which transforms the individual's character entirely.

The term Vesak is the Sinhalese equivalent of the Pali term *Vesakha*, its Sanskrit form being *Vaisakha*. It is the name for the month of May. The full-moon-day of May is a thrice blessed day for the Buddhist, because Buddhists believe that three important events in the life of the Buddha occurred on the Full-moon-day of May: (1) the birth of the *Bodhisatta*, the human being destined to become a Super Human Buddha. (2) The Spiritual Awakening of the *Bodhisatta*, which transformed the human *Bodhisatta* into a Superhuman Buddha. (3) The demise of the mortal body of the *Bodhisatta* that was known to the public as the Buddha, but, in fact, was not the body of the Buddha, because a Buddha does not have a body, mind or soul. Nor can he be born, grow old, fall sick, or die, because he has awakened from the dream of existence. Once awake, he does not exist anymore.

The foregoing statements are somewhat confusing to most readers. Therefore, they need further clarification. Let us begin by explaining the meaning of (1) the birth of a *Bodhisatta*, (2) the Awakening of a *Bodhisatta* to become a Buddha, and (3) the passing away of the mortal body of the *Bodhisatta* that appeared to be a Buddha.

[Birth of the Bodhisatta](#) **Birth of the *Bodhisatta***

The *Bodhisatta* (the Buddha to be), who was Prince Siddhatta Gotama, was born on the full-moon-day of the month of May. This is the reason for the celebration of Vesak.

The question that arose in minds of Indian people during the time of the Buddha was not the question: “How can we thank the Creator for the nice and comfortable world He created for us;” but: “Where is the Creator of this unpleasant world full of suffering?” Their question was humanistic as well as realistic, rather than optimistic but unilateral. Their thinking ran thus: “Who ever created the world has created only suffering, for **to be born** is to **grow old, fall sick and die**; and to meet the unpleasant, and part from the pleasant; and even be always **unable to get what we want**, how we want, and when we want. **Pleasures** are all **evanescent**, and **not easily obtained**. So how can we helpless humans find freedom from this **insecurity** and **suffering** of life?” This is the problem of life that all humans are attempting to solve in one way or another, all the time.

This fact is clearly expressed in the statement supposed to be of the Buddha, immediately after the Awakening.

**“Many a life in this tour of lives
I ran in search of the Creator unknown
Never did I ever meet him though
So painful is repeated birth and death”**

Why he searched for the creator is quite clear. To put an end to suffering of course, not only for him, but for all beings that die. The birth of the *Bodhisatta* was not an ordinary birth. It was the final birth of a being who has been struggling in “*samsara*” for an infinite number of lives, strenuously qualifying himself for the task of becoming a Buddha. This has been beautifully expressed in the story of the birth of Prince Siddhatta.

After a long preparation, lasting four hundred thousand infinite eons, the *Bodhisatta* was waiting in the Tusita Heaven, as Santhusita, the Ruler of the Heaven of Contentment, the Heir to the Glorious Status of Buddhahood, awaiting the final birth in the human world, to become the Buddha, for the benefit of beings suffering in *samsara*, to free them by discovering the way to freedom, through his own effort. A stupendous task which no being in heaven or earth could perform, other than a Bodhisatta, who has especially prepared himself for this task, through an incalculable number of lives in *samsara*, by perfecting the Ten Qualifications (*paramita*), including innumerable sacrifices such as the sacrifice of eyes, head, flesh, blood and even lives.

The *Bodhisatta* descended from the Tusita heaven, into the mother’s womb, when the mother was observing the “Divine discipline” *brahmachariya*, including sexual abstinence. No impure thoughts were present in the mother’s mind, at the time of descending. It was an “immaculate conception” for this reason. (It is important to note here that rebirth does not take place at the moment of sexual intercourse, but very much later).

Many wonderful happenings have been recorded about the birth of the *Bodhisatta*. They all represent the greatness of the extra-ordinary individual who was born. They are the impressive wrappings of an extra-ordinary product. The proper consideration is not whether such descriptions are true or false, but what meaning they attempt to convey to the reader. It is important to note that some wrappings address the emotions rather than the intellect. It is only the ignorance, or the intellectual snobbery, of some skeptical critics that refuses to recognize the importance and usefulness of metaphor and allegory.

The sacred scriptures say that the mother was able to see the developing fetus inside the womb as if through a glass case. The fetus was said to remain in the womb for the full term of gestation. The delivery was painless and it occurred while the mother was standing. The Holy infant was first received in the hands of celestial beings, before humans touched it. Two jets of water poured from the sky, one warm and one cold, to bathe the Holy infant. Then the Holy infant walked seven steps on the earth, while seven lotuses sprang up from earth to receive the tender feet. At the seventh step the infant *Bodhisatta* spoke, introducing himself to the world. He sang in beautiful verse:

**“Highest in the world am I
Oldest in the world am I
Greatest in the world am I
This is my final birth
Never will I come into being again”**

A critique might comment: “There go the words of a conceited ego.” An “ego” He certainly was, but not one conceited. This was a statement of fact, according to the Buddhist faith. In fact, these words point to an important Buddhist concept – the

concept of “*Bodhisatta*”. This is only the self-introduction of a *Bodhisatta*, who is still an “ego” but who is destined to eradicate the “ego” in this very life. It reveals the distinctive character of this extra-ordinary being, through His own words, by the only one who knows.

[Meaning of the Self-introduction](#)

Meaning of the self-introduction

A *Bodhisatta*, who is about to become a Buddha in this very life, is said to be the **Highest in the world**, because He had reached the topmost level in human evolution where the process of evolution is about to terminate. He was at the threshold of the evolutionary struggle for existence, about to wake up from the dream of “existence”. In other words, though biological evolution took place due to a struggle for existence, psychological evolution takes place by stopping this struggle for a valid reason.

It was the Buddha who saw the futility, vanity, and painfulness of this struggle for existence that kept evolution going, and decided to stop it, and so bring this unnecessary painful struggle to an end. Biologically speaking, “life” is nothing but this struggle for existence, which defeats its own purpose – “existence.” The survival of the fittest is the survival of the species and not the individual. Therefore this struggle is not only futile it is also painful and destructive. This was why the evolution of the human being occurs only when he has developed the ability to think, and has found an “error” in this struggle for existence, which is the natural process of “life,” that continues the evolutionary process. It was the enlightened mind of the *Bodhisatta* that decided to stop this futile and painful struggle for existence (*bhava tanha*), and so become a Buddha.

The *Bodhisatta is the oldest* because he is therefore the most mature in the world, both mentally and emotionally, though physically he was an infant. It is important to note here that the teaching of the Buddha is a technique of growth and maturity, rather than a set of rules to be obeyed, in fear of punishment in hell, or out of greed for reward in Heaven.

He is the *Greatest in the world*, because He solved the problem of existence, and won the victory over death. This He did, not just for Himself, but for all beings terrestrial and celestial. The Buddha pointed out that all gods or celestial beings are mortal. Therefore, there is no one greater than an Awake-one, a Buddha, in heaven or on earth.

Because the *Bodhisatta* has not stopped personalization He still thinks “I am” and “mine.” When he wakes up to reality, from the “dream of being,” and stops personalization, he ceases to “be” forever. This is what is meant by the words, “*This is my final birth. Never will I come into being again.*”

[The Meaning of Awakening](#)

The meaning of Awakening

To awaken is to awaken from “the dream of existence.” This means, we are normally dreaming and not fully awake. We are dreaming that we exist and the world exists. The fact, however, is that we have only become conscious of a “world” and a “self,” though we don’t even know how we became conscious. We simply rose from a state of unconsciousness to a state of consciousness.

We are only organisms like all other organisms, plant or animal. Any organism works like a machine, based on the same natural laws, especially determinism. Determinism means, that all natural occurrences in the world are determined by the presence of the necessary conditions. This principle is what the Buddha called *paticca samuppada*. “Conditions being present they come into being, conditions being absent they cease to be.”

We are all natural organisms having five senses. These senses are stimulated by the environment to which the organism reacts. This is what we call perception. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling the touch are perceptions (*viññana*). The data perceived is carried to the brain through nerves like telephone wires. It is the brain that puts everything together and gives meaning to what was perceived by forming concepts. This is how we become conscious of a world. The Buddha knew this and modern scientists know this.

Becoming conscious is a natural process which goes on deterministically but unconsciously. This is why we do not know how we became conscious, even though we know that we are conscious. This “not knowing how” is what the Buddha called *avijja*. It is not mere ignorance but unconsciousness. Ignorance means, not knowing something we can normally perceive. Unconsciousness means not knowing how we perceive, what we normally perceive, even after we have been told how.

How can we become conscious of how we perceive? This is an important question. Perception can be seen from an objective point of view, or from a subjective point of view. Our former description was from an objective point of view. To see it from a subjective point of view, we need to have what is called *satipatthana*, which means “**introspection**” (*sati* = attention + *upatthana* = place within), though commonly translated as “mindfulness.”

This introspection results in *upekkha*, which means “**apperception**” (*upa* = within + *ikkhati* = see), commonly mistranslated as “indifference.” “Apperception” is an important word used in Western philosophy, which means awareness of the mental process of perception. In other words, apperception is subjectively seeing how one perceives, rather than objectively seeing what one perceives, which is perception. Through this process of “apperception” therefore, one is able to observe the process of perception as an “impersonal process” going on deterministically, rather than as an “action” of a “self” within. The act of perception is seen “deterministically” rather than in terms of “free will.” This means one has “depersonalized” the process of perception. One does not think, “I perceive,” instead one thinks, “perception is taking place.” This is how one “awakens” from the “dream of existence,” through a “paradigm shift” from the “notion of personal existence,” to an “awareness of impersonal experience.” This **awakening** or **paradigm shift** results in freedom (*vimutti*) from birth, aging, and death. Through the awakening, we “cease to exist” as a “self” in a “world.” When we have ceased to exist, how can we die, or be born, or age? Our problem has been this “delusion of self” created by emotion and not by reason. Now reason is re-examining this delusion.

Freedom from Birth, Aging, and Death

Freedom from birth, aging, and death

All living beings both plant and animal have a body that lives. It is only the human animal who, in addition to the body, is conscious of a “self.” This is why an animal cannot be attacked by a word, but a human being can be. The word does not attack the body, but it attacks the “ego” or “self.”

The birth of a “body” is biological, while the birth of a “self” is psychological. Therefore it is important to distinguish between the birth of a body and the birth of a “self.” The birth of a body is the birth of an impersonal body, while the birth of a self is the birth of a personal body. Birth of a personal body is the result of personalization of the body. If the body is not personalized it is not a personal body. It is the birth of a “self” that results in suffering, not the birth of a body.

This consciousness of a “self” is not the result of reasoning. It is the result of emotions. This is why it is a delusion. It must be challenged by reason to get rid of it. Yet unfortunately, it cannot be challenged in the presence of emotion because emotion is more powerful than reason. When emotion and reason are in conflict emotion always wins. It must be challenged in the absence of emotion. Therefore we must learn to stop emotion at least temporarily. This temporary stopping comes in the form of “*samatha* meditation,” and the challenge comes in the form of “*vipassana* meditation.”

The body becomes a “self” only when it has been personalized (*upadana*). It is personalized when it is regarded as “mine.” The body, which is originally “not mine,” becomes “mine,” after personalization. What has become “mine” then becomes a part of “me,” because what has been personalized becomes “my person.” “I” am only the sum of all that is “mine.” All that is “mine” therefore becomes “me.” What is “me,” then becomes “myself.” “I” am not an entity separate from what is “mine.” “I” am what is “mine.” “I” come into being through personalization of what is not “mine.” When “I” have come into being, my “self” has come into being. The birth of a “self” through the personalization of what is not “self” is called “being” (*bhava*). From “personalization” comes “my existence” or “my being” (*upadana paccaya bhavo*).

Once the body has become a part of me, through personalization, the birth of the body becomes “my birth.” If the body has not been personalized, the birth of the body is not “my birth.” If nothing has been personalized, I do not exist. When I have stopped personalizing, I have stopped “existing.” This is the “cessation of being” (*bhava nirodha*), through “cessation of personalization” (*upadana nirodha*). This cessation of being is called Nibbana (*bhava nirodho nibbanam*). When “being” has ceased, death has ceased. This is why Nibbana is called “immortality” (*amata*). Yet, this “immortality” is not “eternal life.” It is only the absence of death due to the absence of the “delusion of existence.”

The birth of the “body,” which has been already identified as “myself,” is regarded as “my birth” (*jati*). This means I came into being before I was born. Therefore, “my being” (*bhava*) comes before “my birth” (*jati*). And my aging (*jara*) and my death (*marana*) follow “my birth” (*jati*). But the aging and death of the body are not the aging and death of the “self,” if the body has not been personalized. Without “personalization” (*upadana*) there is no “being” (*bhava*) of a “self.” If there is no “being” of a “self,” there is no birth of a self, or aging and death of a “self.” This is the “immortality” (*amata*) which is called *Nibbana*.

[The Awakening of the Bodhisatta](#)

The Awakening of the Bodhisatta

Bodhisatta's “spiritual awakening” took place at the age of thirty-five, on the full-moon-day of May. That means the *Bodhisatta* “Awoke” from the “dream of existence” and was transformed into a “perfectly selfless” Superhuman *Buddha* (Awake-one). Such a *Buddha* has no body, mind, or soul. He is free from birth, aging and death “here and now,” not after death.

The *Bodhisatta* awoke spiritually when He stopped being carried away by emotions, and so stopped personalizing and so gave up the “delusion of personal being,” or existence as a “self.” This means, He gave up attachment to everything that He thought was His. This was not easy to do, but He had prepared Himself for this task, during the numerous lives in *samsara*, practicing the numerous *paramitas* of self-sacrifice.

Some writers depict the *Bodhisatta* as a very lascivious person. If he was so passionate, like other men, He could never have been able to wake up from the “dream of being.” It was because He had practiced relinquishment and renunciation through numerous lives that He was able to renounce everything that He thought was His, and wake up from the dream of “personal existence” or “being.”

In awakening, the *Bodhisatta* stopped identifying Himself with the body, feelings, sensations, mental constructs, perceptions, cognitions, emotions, actions and everything experienced. He stopped personalizing all elements of experience. Therefore, He ceased to experience a “personal existence.” An Awake-one's or a Buddha's identity is only a social convention. Only others identify “Him” as an individual person. “His” identity is a mistake of the ignorant public. When a *Bodhisatta* awakens from the “dream of being,” He ceases to be a person, and ceases to have an identity.

The *Bodhisatta* ceased to exist as a person, when He awoke from the dream of existence, and entered the reality of impersonality. Through this process of waking up, He was transformed into a “Buddha,” an Awake-one, who does not exist as a “person.” This transformation was not a physical change such as metamorphosis. It was a psychological change as metempsychosis. Buddha is not a physical entity that is visible and identifiable physically. “He” can be seen only through someone's own experience, and understanding of the Dhamma. One who sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha, but not as a person in concrete form, but in abstract.

During the time of the Buddha there was a disciple who was very fond of looking at the Buddha. When the Buddha was preaching, he always sat in a place where he could easily see the figure of the Buddha. So the Buddha said to him: “Why do you keep looking at this filthy body? He who sees me sees the Dhamma. He who sees the Dhamma sees me.”

Even after the death of the depersonalized body, the Buddha still lives in the Dhamma. Even when the Dhamma is lost to the world, the Buddha still lives in the Dhamma, until someone rediscovers the Dhamma, and so sees the Buddha. Yet this is not an “existence” of the Buddha in concrete form but His existence in formless abstract.

A Buddha, “does not exist,” because, in becoming a Buddha he awoke from the dream of existence, and ceased to be a self or person. *Nibbana*, by definition, is the “cessation of being” (*bhava nirodho nibbanam*). This “cessation of being” is not the annihilation of an “existing entity” but the disappearance of the “delusion of being.” All other beings are said to be “existing” only because they carry the “delusion of being.”

[Not Mystical But Logical](#)
Not mystical but logical

This apparently mystical change is not mystical at all, because it is perfectly logical. This psychological change has occurred through a paradigm shift. This difference of paradigm is a difference in the way one perceives the world and oneself. This paradigm shift occurs when passing through a series of observations of experience in logical sequence. This logical sequence of thought, in awakening from the dream of existence, is as follows.

- Everything depends on conditions
- What is dependent on conditions is unstable (*anicca*)
- What is unstable is painful (*dukkha*), because we desire stability (*nicca*).
- What is painful is not under my power to change (*vasavatti*)
- What is not under my power is not “mine” (*netam mama*)
- What is not mine cannot be “me” or “I” (*neso hamasmi*)
- What is not “me” or “I” cannot be my “self” (*neso me attati*)
- What is not “mine” or my “self” is impersonal (*anatta*), and cannot be personalized (*upadana*).

All evil behavior such as crime, war and suicide, and all unhappiness experienced within, is a result of the futile effort to personalize what cannot be personalized. When this is fully comprehended as a fact rationally, a paradigm shift from selfishness to selflessness can occur.

Yet it can be achieved only in the absence of emotional obstacles. This means the individual has to purify and tranquilize the mind before the paradigm shift can occur. This makes it necessary to practice two kinds of meditation: to make the mind tranquil – *samatha* meditation, and to achieve the paradigm shift – *vipassana* meditation.

[Tathagata the Transcendent](#)
Tathagata the Transcendent

A Transcendent One (*Tathagata*) is one who has undergone this paradigm shift, and He never dies. “He” cannot die, because “He” does not exist as a “Person;” “He” does not exist as a person, because “He” does not “personalize;” “He” does not personalize, because “He” does not experience the urge for sensual pleasure (*kama tanha*), the urge to be (*bhava tanha*) or the urge not to be (*vibhava tanha*); “He” does not experience the urge (*tanha*), because “He” does not react to stimulation; “He” does not react to stimulation, because “He” is introspective (*satipatthana*); Because He is introspective, “He” is apperceptive (*upekkha*). Because He is apperceptive, He experiences only “experience” (*phassa*); “He” does not experience “being” (*bhava*), or the existence of a “self” (*atta*); In “His” experience, there is no “experiencer,” or the “experienced”; There is only “experience” (*ditthe dittha mattam bhavissati*), which is dependent on conditions. This experience is not a relationship between a “self” and an “other.” In this experience there is no object seen (*anidassana*). It has no limits (*anantan*). It is all clear (*sabbato paban*).

The *Bodhisatta* woke up from the “dream of being,” because He did not give in to the “urge to be” (*bhava tanha*) through personalization. The stopping of personalization (*upadana nirodha*) lead to the stopping of “being” (*bhava nirodha*). The stopping of being, resulted in the stopping of birth (*jati nirodha*), aging (*jara*) and death (*marana*). This way, He conquered death (*mara parajaya*) and became immortal (*amata*). This immortality was not however, the eternal (*sassata*) life of a soul. It was immortality through the cessation of personalization (*anupada nibbana*), and thus not coming into existence (*bhava*), and so escaping birth, aging, and death.

**“Many a life in this tour of lives
 I ran in search of the Creator unknown
 But never did I meet him though
 So painful is birth again and again
 Oh! Creator, now I see you**

**Never will you create again
Your pillars are all destroyed
Your structure fully demolished
The mind has stopped creating
The urge has stopped forever.”**

Therefore, the *Bodhisatta*, through the process of awakening, conquered death, became immortal, and opened the door to immortality, for all beings with ears to hear, having awakened from the “dream of being,” in a “world” threatened by death. He began His mission to free the world from the jaws of death, by awakening them from their slumber by beating the drum of deathlessness, with the words:

**“Open is the door to immortality
Those who have ears hear and be free.”**

[Gospel of Immortality](#)

Gospel of Immortality

The Buddha preached the Gospel of Immortality to the world for forty long years. The mortal body, which was depersonalized by the *Bodhisatta*, in the process of waking up to Buddhahood, was visible to the public, as the body of the Buddha, and the public identified the Buddha with it. Though this body was not Buddha strictly, the Buddha appeared to the world, through this body, and preached the Gospel. When this mortal body died, however, no one could identify the Buddha as before. The Buddha seemed to disappear from the world, when this so called body of the Buddha died, even though the Buddha was still visible to one who saw the Dhamma.

This apparent disappearance of the Buddha is called, *Parinirvana*, meaning “Complete *Nirvana*,” by Theravada Buddhists today. This term, however, is misleading because it implies that the “*Nirvana*” that the *Bodhisatta* achieved at the time of “waking” was incomplete. A more meaningful term is “*Anupadisesa Nirvana*,” which means, *Nirvana* without the depersonalized remains. In contrast, the *Nirvana* at the time of “waking” is called “*Sopadisesa Nirvana*,” which means, *Nirvana* with the depersonalized remains. This usage of terms is preferable to the use of the term *Parinirvana* as “Complete *Nirvana*.”

Even this usage of terms *Sopadisesa* and *Anupadisesa* is strictly speaking incorrect because in the Itivuttaka the Buddha points out that these terms mean something else. According to this Sutta the *Sopadisesa* and *Anupadisesa* are experiences to be realized here and now, instead of one being something to be experienced in this life and the other to be experienced after death. *Sopadisesa* is the experience of the *Arahat* in the normal life, for example, when going on *pindapata* or when communicating with others. *Anupadisesa* is the experience of the *Arahat* when experiencing *Nirodha Samapatti*.

The *Bodhisatta* “ceased to be” in becoming a Buddha, but once a Buddha, He is really “absent.” We use the higher “H” to indicate that He has transcended the “self-centered existence,” and He does not exist as a “self” any more. This is because the Buddha is not an entity, or body, or even a mind or a soul and He has no identity, no personality; “He” never “is,” nor “was,” nor “will be.” If so, how could “He die?” Therefore, *Parinirvana* is not a glorified term for “death.” It is the complete cessation of “being,” which occurred when the *Bodhisatta* became a Buddha.

[A Pertinent Question](#)

A pertinent Question

Sometimes the question is posed whether the Buddha lives after death or whether He does not live after death. To answer either way is wrong, because Buddha does not exist, either to live after death or to not live after death.

The *Bodhisatta* conquered death, by gaining freedom from the “delusion of being,” by waking up from the dream of “being in the world.” “His” greatness lies, according to Buddhist thinking, in His realization that “He did not exist,” in the first place, either to live forever, or to die for ever.

This explains the fallibility of the infallible Pope when he said: “**The Christians have the hope of ‘eternal life in Heaven’ after death, while the Buddhists are beyond hope because they want ‘eternal death in Nirvana’ after death.**”

This to the Buddhist is not only a fallacy, it is also a **blasphemy**. A Buddhist might in return compassionately state that **the hope of the Pope** when seen from a Buddhist point of view appears to be only **an escape from the reality** of “death and suffering,” **into a fantasy** of “eternal life and eternal happiness in **Heaven**,” which certainly cannot be proved until death.

The *Bodhisatta* became a Buddha, by awakening to the reality of “impersonality” (*anatta*). He conquered death, not by dying, to be never reborn, as the Pope mistakenly thinks, but by “ceasing to be” here and now. He conquered death, not by eliminating rebirth, but by eliminating “being” or existence. The elimination of “being” is not the cessation of life, which is “death.” It is cessation of the “delusion of existence.” He eliminated “being” not through death, but through the process of “depersonalization” of what had being personalized. He did so with the thoughts: “this is not mine,” “this is not me,” “this is not myself.” This conquest of death is very beautifully expressed in the last words of the Buddha:

**“My final word to you, my disciples:
All that is constructed is subject to destruction.
Tread the path in sanity.”**

These last words of the Buddha, sum up His message to the world. The death of the body itself should remind us that the delusion of “self” one creates is subject to destruction. The futility of constructing a “self in the world” has been clearly expressed. Clinging to this evanescent construct is insanity. To walk out of this delusion is sanity. Our task therefore is to stop being insane. It should also remind us that the task of stopping the construction must be accomplished without delay before death can come to interrupt the task. This urgency is what Buddhists should recall on this Vesak day, “struggle on as if your head is on fire.”

This message of the Buddha is the message of freedom from the delusion of “being,” which results in the freedom from death, or immortality. The Buddha achieved this immortality and taught this as the way of salvation to the world. The world, for the most part, preferred to ignore this message, in favor of the “delusion of being,” and the pseudo-immortality of the fantastic dream world.

[Complete Quietus \(Parinirvana\)](#)

Complete Quietus (*Parinirvana*)

The demise of the mortal body, which appeared to the world as the Buddha, is called the “Complete Quietus” (*Parinirvana*). At the age of eighty, the “mortal body,” that was already “depersonalized” by the *Bodhisatta*, on the day of awakening, expired on a full-moon-day of May.

This death, of the mortal body, is called *Pari-Nirvana* today, which term does not mean death, though it is often mistaken to mean, the death of the Buddha. A “Buddha,” who is one who has awakened from the “dream of existence” is immortal, because he has ceased to exist as a body, mind, or soul; even though the body, which is mistaken to mean the Buddha, is living. One has to exist in some form before one can die. If one does not exist, how can one die? Therefore, it is an inaccuracy to state that the Buddha ever died. This is the reason why it is extremely important for a Buddhist to understand the meaning of this “Awakening” of the Buddha.

Once, when I was abroad, I met a Christian lady. She asked me who I was. When I explained to her that I was a Buddhist monk, she said to me, “Buddha died, Christ did not die.” I answered, “Well, I do not want to start an argument with you my lady, I can only say that you are sadly mistaken. If you want to understand further, please come to my temple.” I gave her my address card, but she never came. She was not interested in listening to my answer. I didn’t get the chance to make her understand that, strictly speaking, a Buddha cannot die, because “He” did not “exist” as a “person.” *Bodhisatta* the ascetic awoke from the “dream” of “being a “self,” in a “world” that exists. This way, he was transformed into a fully awake “non-existent” Buddha. He did so by depersonalizing his personality, including the body, with which people identify him.

According to Christian belief, Christ did die, and was resurrected. But, according to Buddhist thinking, the Buddha never died, because “He” never “existed.” The greatness of Christ, according to the Christians, lies in his “rising from the dead.” According to Buddhist thinking everyone rises from the dead. Where as, the greatness of the Buddha lies, according to the Buddhists, in “His” not dying at all. This contrast reveals a very important fundamental difference between the Buddhist and Christian ways of thought.

Buddhist Christian Distinction

Buddhist Christian distinction

The Christian “God” by definition, is “one who exists.” His immortality is through “being eternal.” On the other hand, a Buddha is, by definition, “one who does not exist” even though the body is living; “His” immortality is through a paradigm shift, which is a change in perspective from existence to “non- existence.” Christians believe that God is the Creator of the world. Buddhists believe that God is a human potential, which when actualized by human effort, man becomes God (*Brahma bhuto*). Such a person who has actualized the human potential is called a Buddha (the awake one), which means, one who has awakened from the dream of existence and entered the reality of impersonal experience – *Tathagata* (*Tatha* = Reality + *gata* = gone to, or arrived at).

The foregoing statements are somewhat confusing to most readers. Therefore, they need further clarification. Let us begin by explaining the meaning of (1) the birth of a *Bodhisatta*, (2) the Awakening of a Buddha, and (3) the passing away of the mortal body that appeared to be a Buddha.

- (1) Buddha never existed
- (2) Greatness of the Buddha was that He did not rise from the dead.
- (3) The immortality of the Buddha is through non existence

(1) Let us first define the word existence. To exist is to occupy space and time. What occupies space and time is the body. When we are born what is really born is the body. When some people see me and call my name, it is the body that they see and name. When the government gives me an identity card, it is my body that they photograph. Even my passport or drivers license considers my body to be me. What is objectively experienced by others as me is my body. What is objectively experienced by me as myself is my body. What are subjectively experienced by me as myself are my sensations, emotions, and my thoughts, which I call my mind.

The Buddha was a person who depersonalized all that He experienced as Himself. Thus He lost his identity as a person and so became a “non-person” from His point of view, from His subjective experience of personality or “self.” Once He had done this, He ceased to exist as a “self.” He also lost his self-centered behavior and all selfishness. He could be existing, from other people’s points of view, but as far as he was concerned, He did not exist as a “self.” This was why we said, the Buddha never existed.

(2) Buddhists believe that every person who dies is re born. That is rising from the dead. The aim of Buddhism is to stop rising from the dead. The Buddha is one who achieved this. Therefore, He did not rise from the dead.

(3) The Buddha discovered the way to immortality. This immortality is not eternal life. It is the freedom from the delusion of existence. Thus the immortality of the Buddha is due to non-existence through enlightenment.

When a *Bodhisatta* is born the body continues to be personalized. But this body is soon to be depersonalized when the *Bodhisatta* becomes a Buddha. This is why it is correct to say that a *Bodhisatta* is born as a person. This birth is seen as the birth of an individual personality identified as the *Bodhisatta*. Yet this is not the birth of a Buddha. A Buddha can never be born, because he has ceased to exist by depersonalizing the body.

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

It becomes clear from the foregoing discussion, that the Buddha was never born, and “He” never died because He never existed. Yet the body of the *Bodhisatta* who became a Buddha remains to be seen by all as the Buddha. The Buddha, however, can be truly seen only by someone who sees the Dhamma. The Buddha has “become Dhamma” (*Dhamma Bhuto*) through a paradigm shift. He has moved from the ken of “apparent existence” to the ken of “the reality of impersonal

experience” where no “self” or “world” is visible or known. This is what the Mahayanists call *suññata*. This is why the Buddha is called “The Transcendent One” (*Tathagata*). He has transcended the human and ordinary state of “existence.”

Therefore we celebrate the *Bodhisatta* Gotama’s **conquest of death**, by Awakening from the dream of “being-in-the-world,” and entering the reality of “impersonality” (*anatta*), by becoming the Buddha, the “Awake-one.”

We celebrate Siddhatta Gotama’s **discovery of the way to immortality, or opening the door to deathlessness, for the benefit of all beings**. This achievement is a historic and truly **scientific breakthrough**, which is of great significance to all humanity. It was not only a great step for the *Bodhisatta*, but also a **tremendous step for all humankind**.

Therefore, on this Vesak day, we do not really celebrate the birth, existence, or death of the Buddha, because He was never born, nor did “He” exist, nor did He die. We do, however, celebrate the final birth of the *Bodhisatta* who suffered in *samsara* and practiced the Paramitas through innumerable aeons, for the sake of all beings.

We celebrate the *Bodhisatta* Gotama’s conquest of death, through freedom from “being,” by Awakening from the dream of “being-in-the-world,” and entering the reality of “impersonality” (*anatta*), by becoming a Buddha, an “Awake- one.”

We also feel, as unenlightened beings, our extreme condolences about the disappearance of the figure of the Buddha, when the body of the *Bodhisatta* that was depersonalized in attaining Buddhahood, and was visible to us as the Buddha, attained quietus.

These glorious **Vesak celebrations of Buddhists remind** not only Buddhists, but **all humankind**, about:

(1) The ultimate realities of life

(2) The basic problem of life that everyone suffers from without exception

(3) The victory of man over the ever threatening Challenger – Death (MARA), by the awakening of the Buddha from the dream of existence.

This fact, if understood fully by all humankind,

All the fires of lust, hate, sorrow and fear, will be extinguished forever, and Global Unity, Peace and Happiness, will prevail in the world.

So,

Let’s beat

The drum of deathlessness

For the benefit of all humanity

**“Open for you is the door to immortality
Those who have ears do listen and be free” –**

Buddha

Solution to The Problem of Existence

The problem of existence is the insecurity of life. Every human being is aware of his or her existence, but he/she is also aware of the impending death, which can come at any moment. This is the insecurity of life.

Most people like to forget this reality of life and escape into fantasy and build castles in the air, looking for a utopia, where there is eternal life and eternal happiness. This is what they call HOPE. They think Buddhists are beyond the threshold of hope, because the Buddhists prefer to face the reality of insecurity and find a solution to this problem of existence.

Buddha, the Awakened One, is the one who found a solution to the problem of existence, which modern existentialists are talking about. The solution was to awaken from the dream of existence. This means existence is not a fact. It is only a dream. Existence is not a rational concept but a mistaken notion. We are only dreaming that we exist. The Buddha broke the foundation of the problem of existence, which is "existence."

The existentialist says: "Existence precedes Essence." But the Buddha said: "Experience precedes Existence." The foundation of conscious life is experience, which is perception and conception. This was why the Buddha said, "The world, the beginning of the world, the end of the world, and the way to the end of the world is in this fathom long body itself with its perceptions, and conceptions." This means this mental process clouded by emotions is the Creator of the world, as the Buddha exclaimed immediately after his Awakening:

"Numerous births in this cycle of lives (*sansara*)
I was running in search of the Creator
But never did I meet him, that's awful;
O painful is birth again and again.

O Creator I saw you, no more will you create,
Broken are your supports, your structure is destroyed.
The mind has stopped creating,
The emotions have ceased."

(Buddha)

Buddhism

Buddhism is what was taught and practiced by the greatest Sage that India ever produced, Siddharta Gotama, the Buddha. Strictly speaking, it was not his teaching but the eternal truth rediscovered by him. Buddha is not the name of a person but a title meaning Awakened-One.

Some take Buddhism to be a religion; others regard it as a philosophy. If we carefully examine the earliest records we would see that it should best be described as a psychology or even more appropriately, a psychotherapy. It does deal with religious as well as philosophical, social and individual problems, yet it does so by first bringing them into the field of psychology and solves them as psychological problems. Buddhism is also not a kind of mysterious mysticism as some understand it because even mystic states are understood in Buddhist psychology to be just different altered mental states. Nirvana, the ultimate aspiration of Buddhists, is not a mystic state but a state in which the mind is purged and purified of all ego conceit and all traces of attachment/greed, aversion/hatred, and delusion.

Buddhism offers its own critique of religion. In this, religion is not theocentric, centered around the idea of a creator god, but rather sees it as being centered around the interest of man. Religion is not something that has come down from heaven to fulfill a divine purpose, but something that has grown up on earth to satisfy the deepest of human needs. It is not based on divine revelation but on human discovery. It is not dependent on blind faith and worship but on the understanding of experience through the use of human intelligence. It is not based on history or a story which if proved false would tumble down, but stands on the hard rock of direct personal experience. The practice of religion is not based on the idea of punishment and reward but on selflessness and love, nor is it following the commandments of the creator, but basing one's actions on a feeling of responsibility for oneself and others.

Buddhism does not regard man as a sinner who is incapable of anything better than appealing to the creator for forgiveness. It regards man as capable of rising above all human weaknesses and cultivating a divine mind through his own efforts. One cannot be saved by any external means but he has to save himself through his own efforts and right technique developed by his mind. *The Buddha is not a savior but a guide who teaches the technique of saving oneself after having tested it himself.* The destiny of man is not controlled by the whims of a creator, but by the kind of life he leads, his thoughts, speech and actions in accordance with the law of cause and effect. One's state of mind even determines the situation in which he is reborn. The Buddha taught about rebirth but not in the reincarnation or the transmigration of permanent souls. The life after death is only a continuation of the present process of existence. The Buddha realized that our existence does not begin with this human life nor end with this life in some kind of eternal heaven or hell afterwards, but he beheld that we have been existing since beginning-less time in countless numbers of various existences according to our accumulated Kamma and will continue to do so until the whole process is understood and gradually brought to a standstill. Buddhism is a gradual path of mental evolution, where man transcends human weaknesses and attains perfection of mind and finally solves the problem of existence, attains Nibbana.

All problems in life boil down to one psychological problem called Dukkha or suffering. Suffering is not just poverty, starvation and sickness and so forth which modern man commonly talks about. It is more related to mental suffering in the form of confusion, anxiety, depression, grief, worry, restlessness and so forth which are mainly psychological states. Normally these states of mind are considered to be the fault of circumstances. This is why these are seen commonly as economic or social problems. Yet the Buddha points out that they are caused by our mental attitudes and reactions to circumstances, not by the objects or situations themselves. If we really check up inside our mind we will find this is true.

This suffering is understood in Buddhism to be the clash between ourselves and the world around us. To put it in other words, it is the clash between our desires and reality. This means that suffering is caused by unrealistic desires. Reality frustrates these desires in most cases so we wish that reality were otherwise. Our desires are insatiable. The real cause of our suffering is the unrealistic desire, not the reality that frustrates it. The real cause of the economic problem is not the absence of means to satisfy our endless wants, but the presence of these insatiable wants. So the solution of our problems in life is the eradication of these unrealistic desires which clash with reality and frustrate us and cause us unhappiness. In other words, we have to awaken from our world of dreams and come down to reality, to face and accept reality as it is. This is why Buddhism is not an other-worldly religion or a kind of escapist asceticism but a this-worldly and down to earth realism. Nibbana is not an escape into a trance state of mystical bliss, but rather perfect sanity which goes beyond the so called normality that is itself insanity, from a Buddhist point of view.

To understand Buddhism we have to understand ourselves, as it is merely a description of ourselves. What has to be done is not to examine the pages of old worn out texts, though this may be useful at the outset to find out where we have to go; nor do we have to make long excursions into outer space or make complicated mathematical calculations. The Buddha's Teachings are like routes on a map which help us to journey through the labyrinths of our own mind. When the mind is understood we have understood everything. The Buddha said, "The world, the beginning of the world, the end of the world, and the path leading to the end of the world is right here in this fathom-long body with its perceptions and consciousness."

The person who understands in this way need not worry about the problem of an after life. Buddhism is not a worry about circumstances here or hereafter, but a concern about mental states here and now. If we look after the present state of mind, the future will look after itself. Nibbana is a state of being which the mind is purified of all clinging, craving, aversions, ego-conceit, and ignorance here and now, not a trance or life after death. If Buddhism is understood and practiced by mankind, this earth would become a place of harmony and happiness; happiness not through plenty and power, but happiness through desire-less-ness and wisdom.⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Venerable Dr. M. Punnaaji wrote the "Introduction" for *The Way to Peace and Happiness* compiled by Bhikkhu Yogavacara Rahula

Buddhism as a Psychotherapy

It is popularly thought today that Buddhism is a religion containing numerous myths, traditions and mystical practices. If we examine the original Buddhism as taught by Gautama the Buddha, we will discover that it is indeed different from this popular view.

In order to clarify this point, let me draw the reader's attention to the distinction between original Buddhism and modern Buddhist practices and belief. It is important not to confuse modern Buddhism as it is practiced in different cultures and societies with what was taught and practiced by Gotama the Buddha and his disciples. What is practiced today in most Buddhist cultures, whether Theravada or Mahayana, are mainly rituals and ceremonies associated with emotionally held traditional dogmas or world-views and objects of veneration. This type of Buddhism is not different from any other religion with different dogmas, rituals and symbols of worship, which serve mankind only in temporarily reducing the anxieties and worries of life, about the here and hereafter. Quite distinct from this modern Buddhism is Original Buddhism which was a practical solution to the basic problem of existence which is the anxiety that underlies all our daily concerns, troubles and tribulations. Without understanding this distinction, it is not possible to examine this psychotherapeutic aspect of Buddhism. Therefore, I wish to emphasize at this point that whenever I use the word "Buddhism", I refer to that original Buddhism and not to any form of modern Buddhism that is practiced by any culture today.

In speaking of the psychotherapeutic aspect of Buddhism, I have presented my position too mildly. I would prefer to say that Buddhism is entirely a psychotherapy. My hesitation in doing so, is because it would be too much of a shock to the devout ethnocentric Buddhist. Yet, I would like to remind those familiar with Buddhism that the Buddha says, in the *Anguttara Nikaya*, that it may be possible for a person to claim to have been free from physical disease even for a hundred years, but it is not possible for a person to claim to have been free from mental disease even for one day, except for an *Arahant* or a perfected disciple or a Buddha. It is recognized by all Buddhist scholars that the ultimate aim of the Buddha, according to the Pali *Nikayas*, is to produce *Arahants*. *Arahantship* was the culmination of the Original Buddhist Practice.

If the *Arahant* is the only person with perfect mental health, the aim of the Buddha was to produce mentally healthy personalities. This means that Buddhism is a psychotherapy or rather the ultimate psychotherapy. In the Pali Nikayas, the Buddha was called the "**Unsurpassable physician and surgeon**" (*anuttaro bhisakko sallakatto*) and also the "**Unsurpassable trainer of persons**" (*anuttaro purissa dhamma sarati*). Expressed in modern language, these terms may be rendered as "**the super psychiatrist**" and "**the super personality trainer**".

Let us now examine Buddhism in relation to modern psychotherapeutic concepts to find out whether this claim is true. When I examine the history of the evolution of modern psychotherapeutic concepts, I find that all modern theories and practices are centred around one important problem which is understandable in terms of the structural hypothesis presented by Sigmund Freud (in 1923). Almost all modern therapeutic systems could be described in terms of this structural hypothesis. These different systems could be broadly classified into two groups, that is, (a) those therapies that are mainly concerned with the *Id* and its expressions and (b) those that are mainly concerned with the *Ego* and its functions.

The psychologies can also be seen as affective therapies and *Ego* psychologies as cognitive therapies. It is not possible to discuss in detail these different therapies within the limits of this presentation. However, I wish to draw your attention to this all important psychological problem revealed through the structural hypothesis of Freud. The reason for my drawing your attention to these important assumptions of modern psychotherapeutic thinking is to facilitate the introduction of the Buddhist concepts that underlie the Buddhist therapeutic technique. I would not be able to do justice to this subject within the brevity of this presentation. Though there are many aspects of the therapeutic technique of the Buddha, I can summarize the teachings of the Buddha to make you aware of the basic principles on which this Buddhist psychotherapy stands. I see no better way to introduce these basic principles than to discuss the contents of the first sermon of the Buddha called the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*, appearing in the *Samyutta Nikaya*, and translated by me as "**The Revolution of the Wheel of Experience**".

The first point elaborated in the Sutta is that there are two extreme modes of living to be avoided. One is the pursuit of sensual pleasure which is bi-polarized as **seeking sensual pleasure and avoiding sensual pain** (*Kamsukallikanuyoga*). The other extreme is self exhaustion through **self-denial and asceticism** (*Attakilamatanuyoga*). Avoiding these two extremes, the Buddha teaches a **third intermediate mode of living** (*Majjima Patipada*) called the **Sublime Eight-fold Way** (*Ariya Attangita Magga*). This third intermediate way consists of an awareness of reality and is accompanied by thinking, speaking, acting and living in harmony with it.

This teaching of the Buddha could easily be understood in terms of the structural hypothesis of Freud. The pursuit of sensual pleasure is nothing but the activity of the *Id*. The special emphasis of Buddhism is on the fact that gratification of the *Id*, through seeking sensual pleasures does not lead either to mental health or happiness. This concept is not entirely in conflict with Freudian thinking because Freud recognized that emotional maturity is gained through the overcoming of the pleasure principle by the reality principle. Some modern psychologists still believe that gratification of the *Id* in some way is necessary for mental health. This of course is not entirely denied in Buddhism, as we shall subsequently see.

Self exhaustion through self denial is again, obviously, the activity of the *Super Ego*. According to Buddhism, being guided entirely by the *Super Ego* is not conducive to mental health. This too is acceptable to psychoanalytic thinking as according to Freud, a complete repression of the *Id* in this way leads to the utilization of the full psychic energy available to the *ego* in this task of repression and therefore leaves the *Ego* ineffectual for dealing with external reality. The healthy intermediate mold of living recommended by the Buddha, which is to align one's thinking and living in harmony with reality, is undoubtedly the activity of the *Ego*, from a Freudian standpoint. Since, according to Freud, maturity consists in being dominated by the reality principle, this intermediate way of the Buddha falls in line with the Freudian concept of mental health, which is also the generally accepted view of all modern psychotherapists. It is also recognized generally in modern psychotherapy that an adequate sense of reality or the ability to distinguish between the outer world and the inner world of wishes and impulses is an important indication of mental health. In severe mental illness, this ability is considered impaired or totally lost. This sense of reality is present to a greater degree in the neurotic and in the psychotic. However, modern psychologists admit that even the normal person is not perfect in this ability to distinguish reality, thus agreeing with the Buddhist position. An important aspect of the development of the sense of reality, is the ability to distinguish between '**self**' and '**not self**', or what is under one's control and what is not under one's control. Freud recognized [in 1911] that frustration of the *Id* due to the impermanence of external objects is the most significant factor in the development of the concept of self in the infant and the demarcation of the *ego* boundaries or the line that separates the 'self' from the '**not self**'.

The Buddhist psychotherapist, it must be pointed out, does not play the role of a doctor in his therapeutic practice. His role is that of the teacher. His technique of therapy is a process of education. We might even go so far as to say that Buddhism is a form of *Ego* therapy or cognitive therapy.

Through education, the patient's sense of reality is improved. The conflict between the *Id* and the *Super Ego* as well as that between the *Id* and reality is resolved through education of the *Ego*. This education is done first through verbal communication by the use of reason and secondly through the practice of meditation where the patient, or more correctly, the student, is helped to become aware of his experience within, which is observed as physical movements and tensions, feelings and emotions, and as mental images and concepts.

The first thing that the student learns is that goodness and happiness are not opposed to each other, for goodness is happiness. To put in Freudian terms, the pleasure seeking of the *Id* is not wrong or evil but true pleasure is not the pleasant sensation but inner happiness. This inner happiness is achieved through relaxation and calm rather than through stimulation of the senses, excitement, tension and release of tension. Happiness is gained through the relaxation response. In other

words, the student is enlightened about the need to pursue the goal of calm in order to satisfy all three parts of the personality, namely the *Id*, the *Super Ego* and *Ego*. The *Id* is satisfied because calmness is the way to happiness. The *Super Ego*, which seeks to do what is good and right, is satisfied because calmness is the way to be good. The *Ego* is satisfied because calmness is the realistic way to be happy and good and therefore calmness is realistic. Calmness also helps the student to get in touch with reality without interference from the wishes and impulses. This way the *Ego*, which seeks to be realistic, is satisfied.

The pursuit of this harmonizing goal of calmness which resolves the conflict within and without is called the **Sublime Pursuit** (*Ariya Pariyesana*) and this way of life is called the **Sublime Way** (*Ariya Magga*) or the **Harmonious Way** (*Samma Magga*). It is also the way of **mental health** (*Arogya*). This explanation of the Buddha's teaching in terms of modern psychological concepts is not done with a view to obtain support for the Buddhist position from modern psychology but to make the Buddhist position intelligible to the modern mind acquainted with modern psychological concepts, and to show that the Buddhist psychotherapeutic is not only relevant in the modern world but also a constructive contribution to modern psychotherapeutic thought.

The first sermon of the Buddha, which we are in the process of discussing, introduces the subject in the foregoing way, and proceeds further to discuss the basic problem of anxiety, called *Dukkha*. This anxiety, according to the Buddha, is experienced in relation to seven basic situations: 1) **birth**, 2) **old age**, 3) **disease**, 4) **death**, 5) **meeting unpleasant people and circumstances**, 6) **parting from pleasant people and circumstances**, 7) **frustration of desire**. The totality of anxiety is also presented as **an aggregate** (*khanda*) or **body** (*kaya*). It is the sum total of all experienced phenomena analyzed into five aggregates which are **personalized**, to form the experience of "**self-in-the-world**". This five-fold totality of personalized phenomena is called *Pancupadanakkhandā*. It is also called *Sakkhaya*, which means "**personalized body**". This may be compared to the concept of "**self image**" or "**self concept**" that is found in modern psychology.

This "**self-image**" which is the result of the **personalization of phenomena** is seen as a bundle of anxiety by the Buddha and this anxiety is bundled up through the process of personalization which results in the concept of "**being self**" (*bhava*). All worries, anxieties, fears and feelings of insecurity, which are basic to life, are the result of this process of **personalization** (*Upadana*) and being a *self* (*bhava*). This process of **personalization** is associated with the **feeling of power** over what is personalized. Therefore, **personalization** is also seen as the **wielding of power** (*vasavatti*). From this standpoint, in order to remove the basic anxiety that underlies human existence, it is necessary to **depersonalize** (*upadana nirodha*) the five-fold totality phenomena and remove the "**self concept**". Therefore the ultimate purpose of Buddhism is to produce an individual who is free from the emotional experience of "**self**" within. This is the one who is perfect in mental health and who is called *Arahant*, the worthy one. Though this ultimate state is rarely reached, the mental health of an individual is measured according to the degree to which the individual has lost his experience of self.

The question seems to be a matter of self-boundary or *ego* boundary from a Freudian standpoint. This is the extent to which a person identifies the things in the world as belonging to himself or as a part of himself. The abnormal person's self-boundary is greater in circumference than that of the normal one. The normal person's self-boundary is greater in circumference than that of the supernormal one. The supernormal person's self-boundary is greater in circumference than that of the sublime one. Buddha therefore recognizes two levels of being above the normal level, the **supernormal** (*uttari manussa*) and the **sublime** (*ariya*).

The personalization process is dependent on what is called *tanha*, which in **literal translation is thirst**, which is similar to the Freudian urge. This **thirst**, or *tanha*, is three-fold: **the thirst for pleasure, the thirst for existence and the thirst for non-existence**. It is interesting to note that the Freudian concept of drives which included the sexual and the self-preserved drives at first, and later proposed as the life and death drives, seems to coincide with the Buddhist concept of *tanha*. It seems that psychologists are rediscovering what the Buddha discovered 2500 years ago. Yet the aim of Buddhism goes beyond the aim of modern psychology in that a complete disappearance of *tanha* is aimed at. According to Buddhism, perfect mental health is not achieved until this thirst has been completely rooted out. Although modern psychology seems to rest satisfied by making an abnormal person normal, Buddhism aims at removing even normal mental discomfort and unhappiness by bringing about perfection of health. It is interesting to note that the Buddha recognizes nine levels of mental health above the normal stage. This is discussed in detail in a sutta in the *Anguttara Nikaya* (*A IV 44*). Of the **nine supernormal** (*uttari manussa*) levels of mental health, the ninth one which is called the **sublime level** (*ariya bhumi*) is further analyzed into four levels of personality: 1) that **Stream entrant** (*sotapanna*); 2) the **Once returner** (*sakadagami*); 3) the **Non-returner** (*anagami*); and 4) the **Worthy One** (*arahant*). Modern psychology, of course, does not seem to think that it is possible to remove this thirst or urge altogether. Yet Eric Fromm points out that Freud's ultimate aim was to remove the *Id* entirely and he quotes Freud as saying, "in place of the *Id* there shall be the *Ego*." This seems to support the Buddhist position. The first sermon of the Buddha that we are discussing goes on to explain further the technique by which this thirst is removed. This technique is called the **Sublime Eight-Fold Way** which we discussed earlier as the medial mode of living that avoids the two extremes: the pursuit of sensual pleasures, and self exhaustion through "self denial". This **Eight-Fold Way** begins with what is called *samma ditti*, which is awareness of reality by understanding three important facts of life: 1) **instability** (*anicca*), 2) **discomfort or anxiety** (*dukkha*) and 3) **impersonality** (*anatta*). *Anicca*, or **instability**, is the transitory nature of all experienced phenomena to which we become attached and which we **personalize**, thinking "**this is mine**", "this is me or myself". *Dukkha* or **anxiety** is what is experienced due to the experiencing of what has been **personalized**. This anxiety is the result of a clash between the wish for permanence and the reality of instability. Here we begin to distinguish between the wish for permanence and the fact that we do not wield any power over anything because we cannot make permanent what is impermanent. It is the recognition of the fact that we do not have power not only over external objects but also over what is within the body which is identified as self. In other words, if ownership is seen as lordship or wielding of power over what is owned, we own nothing in the world, not even

what we call ourselves. Therefore, there is no basis for the concept "**mine**" or "**myself**". In other words, the "**self concept**" is also seen as made up of our wishes or impulses. This is, in Freudian terms, reality testing or distinguishing between reality and a wish. This way we acquire the healthy sense of reality which removes all anxiety. This understanding results in an emotional state of calmness, happiness and kindness. Such an emotional state leads to good external behavior, verbal and physical, which is regarded as good socially. A life based on this perspective and this emotional state and behavior is a harmonious life. And this harmonious life has to be maintained and perfected by means of the harmonious practice.

In discussing the harmonious practice we come to another aspect of Buddhist therapy which is in line with a different kind of psychological technique from what we have just discussed. The modern psychological technique that falls in line with this practice comes under what is called the Behaviour Therapies. This practice could be described by using terms like desensitization, operant conditioning, and also the learning theory. Buddha regards even mental processes as habits of thought which have been learned and which could be unlearned by consciously stopping their repetition, and constantly practicing wholesome thoughts. What are regarded as wholesome thoughts are those thoughts that are calming. Those that excite the mind and produce tension are regarded as unwholesome.

Buddhism also recognizes that affective mental processes or emotional excitements are rooted in cognitive mental processes, such as the formation of concepts or interpretation of experiences. According to how you interpret the situation, you become emotionally excited or become calm and relaxed. These interpretations that produce excitement are always associated with a "**self-concept**" or "**self-image**". If we carry bad self-images habitually, we become habitually unhappy individuals. By practicing good thoughts we begin to eliminate these bad self-images and cultivate images of calm. The calm mind is able to observe the subjective experience objectively and this brings us to the next step which is the harmonious awareness. In the harmonious awareness, one becomes aware of the subjective experience objectively and by the constant practice of this awareness, one begins to depersonalize the subjective experience. This way the **personality perspective** (*sakkaya ditti*) is gradually removed followed by further gradual removal of all thoughts of "**I**" and "**mine**". This gradual depersonalizing process calms the mind further and leads to the experiencing of progressively deeper levels of tranquillity and happiness, leading to the perfection of mental health with the complete eradication of the experience of self within and the rooting out of thirst, and the disappearance of all anxiety for good. This ultimate state of mental health is rarely attained in modern Buddhist practice, but this is the final goal of the Buddhist as taught 2500 years ago.

These principles of Buddhist psychology could be used in the modern world and could be constructively used by modern psychotherapists. Space limitation does not allow me to discuss in detail, in the present essay, the various cases where the Buddha has used these principles in his time. For the same reason, I am unable to discuss here some of the cases in my own experience where I have used these principles. The most important of all is the use of these principles on oneself. I would like to state, in passing, that I have tested in my own experience the validity of these principles.

In discussing the **First Sermon of the Buddha** called the **Revolution of the Wheel of Experience** in this way, as the process of transformation of an individual's personality from an unhealthy one to one of health, I might appear to have strayed away from the Orthodox Theravada, Mahayana or any other Buddhist tradition. But as I pointed out earlier, I am not discussing any form of modern Buddhist standpoint or practice. I am discussing the **Original Teaching and Practice of the Buddha** as found in the earliest sources recognized by all scholars which do not belong to any modern school of thought. I hope this effort will kindle your interest in exploring further the early teachings of the Buddha. I believe that if modern psychologists make a serious study of these early teachings of the Buddha, it would become a significant turning point and breakthrough in modern psychotherapeutic thought and practice.

A Process of Personal Growth, Maturity

"Buddhist meditation, as the Buddha taught it, is a psychological technique of transcending human weaknesses and human suffering through the evolution of the human consciousness. This evolution of consciousness is a process of growth and expansion of awareness consciously achieved through a systematic psychological technique. When this gradual evolutionary growth, expansion, and unfolding of the human consciousness has reached the ultimate point of maturity, this attainment is called the "**Harmonious Full Awakening**" (*Samma Sam Bodhi*). The one who awakens in this way is called the "**Harmoniously Awakened One**" (*Samma Sam Buddha*).

The use of the term "awakening" is to indicate that this expansion of consciousness is an awakening to reality, which means, the normal human being is not fully awakened to reality. That is, the normal human consciousness is not conscious of reality. In fact, according to the Buddha, it is in conflict with reality. This is why the human being is said to be normally suffering, and the aim of Buddhism is to bring this normal suffering to an end. The term "harmonious", means freedom from conflict with reality. It is being in harmony with reality.

This also implies that this kind of awakening is not a normal experience. It is a supernormal experience. It is an awakening to a super normal reality, which is quite different from the reality that normal people experience. This supernormal awakening is therefore quite different from the normal awakening from normal sleep. The normal awakened state is, according to the Buddha, a sleep or dream or fantasy. The aim of Buddhist meditation therefore is to awaken from this dream full of suffering, into a supernormal reality, where there is a supernormal level of mental health, goodness, happiness, and truth.

Humanistic Religion Buddhism avoids the common theistic and mystical interpretation of the religious experience as "the union of the soul with God." Instead, it takes a psychological standpoint. Buddhism, being a humanistic religion, is not built around the concept of the Creator God, but is centered on human interests and speaks about human potentials. Buddhists believe that the human consciousness can evolve to a level of divine perfection. A human being who transcends the ordinary human limitations in knowledge, power and goodness, and attains to this state of perfection is called, "**God**

become" (*brahma bhuto*). This state of perfection is identical with that of the "**Harmoniously Awake One**", the **BUDDHA**.

From this Buddhist point of view, "God" is seen as the ideal of human perfection that the human being conceives, and struggles to realize through the practice of religion. When the human being does realize this ideal of perfection, he "becomes God". This "God" of the Buddhist may be seen as an anthropomorphic God, though He is not seen as the Creator of the world, or His son or messenger. This "God", from a Buddhist point of view, is seen rather as the destroyer of the world. This is because the world, as the Buddha sees it, is **an illusion** (*maya*) created by the human consciousness. It is from this illusory dream that one has to awaken, in order to be free of human suffering. Because the Buddha frees people from this illusion, he can be called the destroyer of the world.

This Buddha who is not the Creator of the world, or His son, or even His messenger, but the destroyer of the world can be misunderstood to be a Devil. But the fact that he is on the side of goodness and not on the side of evil supports the fact that he cannot be called a Devil. Buddhists honor and worship the Buddha, because Buddhists believe that He, in the human body, reached the "Supreme State of Perfection" that all religions worship, what ever be the form in which they conceive it. The Buddha is traditionally, described by Buddhists as "**the God of gods**" (*devatideva*) and as "**God by purity of mind**" (*visuddhi deva*). This is not a deification of a human being but the description of the evolution of the human being. It is also the redefinition of the term "God", and the redefinition of the term "religion" from a humanistic standpoint. From this humanistic standpoint, God does not create the human being, but the human being creates God in his own image.

Religion, defined from the Buddhist standpoint, is the struggle of the human being to solve the problem of human existence. This problem is the problem of evil, unhappiness, and death. The solution is sought through the pursuit of goodness, eternal happiness, and eternal life. This pursuit ultimately takes the form of the pursuit of the ideal of human perfection. This ideal of human perfection is seen as the perfection in goodness, happiness, and wisdom. Religion, from the theistic standpoint, has come down to earth from heaven, to solve the problem of a Creator. But from the humanistic point of view, religion has grown up on earth, to solve a human problem, through the perfection of human nature. Buddhists do not therefore speak of a "God become man", but of a "man become God". This "God" of the Buddhist therefore is a "theopsychic man" rather than an "anthropomorphic God".

The Purpose of Meditation The Buddhist meditation is not a mystical practice. Our aim is not to become mystics. This technique of meditation is for people living a secular life, as householders, doing jobs, having family responsibilities, and involved in various relationships. What such people need is freedom from stress, peace of mind, healthy relationships, self-confidence, success in life, and efficiency at work. This means, learning to gain control over the emotions that prevent them from performing their duties effectively. These problematic emotional excitements can come in the form of lust, hate, fear, worry, or anxiety. Buddhist meditation, practiced in the right way, can help one be free of emotional disturbances, so that one is free to think clearly and act rationally.

This Buddhist technique of meditation does not involve chanting mantras, exercises in concentration, or entering trance states. It involves efforts to consciously purify the mind. When the mind is purified one experiences an inner exhilaration. This exhilaration can mature into rapture. When the body relaxes, one feels comfortable. When the body is comfortable, the mind enters a state of equilibrium. When the mind is in equilibrium, kindness and compassion is experienced. Such a tranquil mind can also think clearly, resulting in intelligent behaviour.

The rapture that we refer to is not a state of emotional excitement. And the kindness or compassion that we speak of is not based on an attachment. This rapture is a state of happiness based on mental tranquility, and the kindness is a state of selflessness. According to the Buddha, emotional excitement is not true happiness, and attachment is not true love. Therefore our method of meditation is aimed at cultivating a tranquil mind and a relaxed body, resulting in the experience of happiness, comfort and kindness, accompanied by intelligent thought and action.

Samatha and *Vipassana* One often hears today of the two terms - *Samatha* and *Vipassana*. *Samatha* is the cultivation of tranquillity, and *Vipassana*, commonly translated as insight, is the cultivation of the objective awareness of the subjective mental process.

Most writers, when they describe *samatha bhavana*, think of it as practicing concentration, but true meaning of *samatha* is **not concentration**. Concentration only leads to the hypnotic state. It is well known as the Braids method of hypnosis. This wrong translation has made some people to think that *samadhi* is hypnotic trance. **Concentration** is a **mistranslation** of the term *samadhi*, which has been blindly adhered to through many generations of English translators.

The term *samadhi* literally **means balance** or **equilibrium**. The Buddha defined it as "*cittekaggata*", which means the **homogeneity of disposition** (*citta*=**disposition**; *ekaggata*=**homogeneity** or **uniformity**). This term has also been **mistranslated** as "**one-pointedness of mind**," conveying the meaning of concentration.

"Homogeneity of disposition" is the description of a mind free of conflicting emotions. That means harmony, tranquillity or equilibrium. It is therefore important to understand that Buddhist meditation does not involve concentration or hypnosis. *Samatha* meditation is not the practice of self-hypnosis, and *samadhi* is not a hypnotic trance. ***Samatha* meditation is a process of purifying and tranquilizing the mind, through a series of gradually deepening levels of tranquillity. *Samadhi* refers to this series of gradually deepening levels of emotional and mental tranquillity, achieved through a gradual reduction of experience.**

The term *vipassana* when translated as "insight" can be misleading too. This is because the term "insight" as it is used in modern psychology, carries a different meaning. In psychology, it is used to mean a sudden solution of a problem, and in psychotherapy; it is understood as, bringing into awareness of repressed emotions.

In Buddhist meditation, the term *vipassana* refers to **an experience best described as the direct awareness of the mental process of experiencing. Experiencing** here means: **seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking and feeling.**

This reflective awareness of experience is not a concept unfamiliar to the Western mind. The philosopher Leibniz referred to it as apperception. Kant distinguished between empirical and transcendental apperception. We could use the term "transcendental apperception", as Kant used it, to refer to *abhinna*, which is the ultimate result of the practice of *vipassana* meditation. One can understand this fully, however, only when one is able to experience it oneself. Until then, it will only be a theory. It is therefore not so much an experience to be conceptualized as one to be actualized. The practice of *vipassana* leads to *panna*, which occurs due to a paradigm shift, which is a shift from the "experience of existence" to the "experience of experience". It is not staying in the second paradigm but seeing experience from both points of view and gaining a broader perspective (*parinna*). This cognitive transparency which results from this **transcendental apperception**, is called "**penetrative awareness**" (Pali: *panna* ; Skrt.: *prajna*).

Analysis of Experience

Normally, we experience "existence" when we think in terms of an existing "experiencer" experiencing the existing, "object of experience". There are three parts to that experience as follows:

Experiencer (Subject)
↓
Experience
↓
Experienced (Object)

The term "**existence**" (*bhava*) refers to the apparent existence of the "**subject**" and the "**object**" of **experience**, on which are based all **emotional relationships** between the subject and the object. The normal paradigm is the experience of the existence of a subject and an object, and the relationship between them. It is to think that there is a "subject" experiencing an "object" cognitively and affectively. Through the *vipassana* meditation the meditator becomes aware of this experience as only an "**experience**", instead of as a real "**existence**" and a relationship. This means, the "**existence**" of the **subject** and the **object** is seen as an "**experience**" only, or as a mere product of the process of perception, or of experiencing.

In other words, the **subject** and the **object** are seen as "**creations of the mental process**". This means, the process of experiencing precedes the notion of the existence of subject and object, not vice versa. This may be stated as, "**experience precedes existence**". It is seeing that "**experience**" is the **ultimate foundation** of "**existence**". This uncommon paradigm may be called the "**experiencing of experience**" which is quite different from the common paradigm of the "experience of existence". This is the **paradigm shift** from "**existence**" to "**experience**". When this happens, all **subject/object relationships** are seen as **meaningless**.

This **paradigm shift** can take place only by **letting go of all attachments to objects of experience, the subjectively experienced "self", and all relationships, through depersonalization**. This paradigm shift is the **freedom** from the experience of **existence**, and **all the suffering** accompanying it. This is called the "**cessation of existence**" (*bhava nirodha*). When this happens, all sufferings, fears, worries and anxieties come to an end. This is **NIBBANA**, which has been defined by the Buddha as "**the cessation of existence**" (*bhava nirodho nibbanam*).

This cessation of existence is not a death but the freedom from the dream of existence, which is an awakening to the reality of "**impersonal experience**". Therefore **Nibbana** (*Nirvana*) is the experience of the ultimate reality of impersonal experience. This idea may be confusing at the beginning, but it becomes clearer as one advances in meditation.

Meditation is a Way of Living

Very often meditation is referred to as sitting. This again is a misunderstanding due to the confusion of Buddhist meditation with the Zen practice of sitting called Zazen. It is important to emphasize here that the original Buddhist meditation was not mere "sitting". Buddhist meditation is not a physical exercise but a mental training. It is not inactivity or living in a trance like state. It is maintaining a pure and tranquil mind while in any posture. It can be done in all four postures: walking, standing, sitting and lying down. Buddhist meditation is an effort to change one's thinking, feeling and behaviour, through the constant practice of introspective awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, speech and action. It is a different way of living. The **main thing in Buddhist meditation** is to practice the **Super-normal Eight-fold Way**. This way is usually translated as the **Noble Eightfold Path**. I find the former translation more meaningful. The Pali term "*ariya*" is usually translated as "noble" but it is translated here as "supernormal" because the Buddha used this term "*ariya*" to refer to a special level of life above the normal, which he wanted his followers to rise to, in order to be free of normal unhappiness. The normal level of experience was called the "**common folk's level**" (*putujjana bhumi*), meaning ordinary level. The term that the Buddha used to refer to this teaching was "*Ariya Dhamma*", which means the "**Supernormal Experience**" (*ariya=supernormal; dhamma=experience*). When the Buddha used this term "*ariya*", he was not using this term as a synonym for the modern term "Buddhist". He was merely referring to a level of living above the normal. One who

understands and practices the teaching of the Buddha is called an "*ariya savaka*", meaning the "**hearer**" of the **Supernormal Experience**.

In other words, what the Buddha meant by the term *ariya* was a higher level of growth of the human consciousness. The **aim of Buddhist meditation is to raise the human consciousness to a higher level**. Just as the aim of modern psychotherapy is to raise an abnormal person to a normal level of thinking and living, the aim of the Buddha was to bring the normal person to a super normal level of thinking, feeling and living. It is important to understand this distinction. This is why the translation of the term "*ariya*" as **Supernormal** is **preferable**. This is why Buddhist meditation is here called a "**growth technique**", using a modern psychological term.

By practicing Buddhist meditation, one hopes to grow to a higher level of emotional maturity, where one is free of normal unhappiness. This process of growth takes place according to a natural law, and following a human technique. It doesn't happen automatically or through a supernatural power."

Become Buddhist Introduction

Practising Buddhism and being a Buddhist are two different things. You may not be a Buddhist but you can still practice Buddhism. On the other hand, you may be a Buddhist but not practice Buddhism. Quite different from both practising and being is becoming a Buddhist.

On the one extreme are the Westerners who experiment with Buddhist practice but do not become Buddhists. They miss the full benefit of the practice. On the other extreme are the Easterners, born in Buddhist countries and brought up in Buddhist cultures, who call themselves Buddhists but do not practise Buddhism. They get very little benefit, if any at all, from Buddhism. There is a third intermediate group of people, however, that avoids both extremes; that is, those who become Buddhists. They are the ones who really benefit from the teaching of the Buddha.

Those who call themselves Buddhists just because they have been born into a Buddhist family or because they practise some rituals, are mistaken. One does not become a Buddhist by birth, by practice, or even by initiation. One becomes a Buddhist by what one is. Buddhists by birth as well as non-Buddhists, practitioners of Buddhism or otherwise, can become Buddhists if they want to and know how. To do so, one has to understand what one is.

[Character Structure](#) **Character Structure**

What one is is one's character structure, which consists of one's philosophy of life, one's aim in life, what one speaks habitually, what one does habitually, and how one lives habitually. Habits are tendencies of behaviour which are perpetuated by practice; Practice means repetition. What one repeats habitually, one becomes. One repeats, however, only what one wants to be. One is what one wants to be. What one wants to be depends on one's sense of values, which in turn depends on one's philosophy of life.

An individual's character is a functional whole that is organized to reach a set goal. Every habit of thought, speech, and action is an integral part of this functional whole, which is necessary to reach this goal.

The goal, however, is always a personality. It is some self that one wants to be. To be more accurate, the goal is a visualized image of the person one wants to become.

This person one wants to become is always a person one considers to be superior in some form. One always wants to move from a state of inferiority to a state of superiority. One's goal tends to be what one perceives to be lacking in oneself. What is perceived to be superior depends on one's sense of values. These values, again, depends on one's philosophy of life.

If we want to change our habits, we can do so only by becoming a different person: by a rebirth-which means we have to change our philosophy of life. We have to change our goal in life, which will be followed by a complete reorganizing of our thought, speech, action, and life to reach a different goal. This means, we will have a new way of thinking, a new way of feeling and a new way of speaking, acting, and living. Then old habits will be dropped and new habits will be formed. Isolated habits cannot be eliminated because they are essential parts of one's character structure organized to reach a desired goal. It is only by a character transformation that one can change one's habits. This is the reason for the many failures in attempts to overcome habits like eating, drinking, smoking, etc.

[Buddhist Character Structure](#)

Buddhist Character Structure

Many of the above concepts are accepted by modern psychologists, especially the Adlerians and Behaviorists and in modern psycho-cybernetics. But more than twenty five centuries ago, the **Unsurpassable Trainer of Personality** (*anuttaro purisadamma sarati*), the **Buddha**, the **Awakened One**, formulated a system of transforming character based on these principles. When one examines this system carefully, one realizes that Buddhism is a system of personal growth and inner transformation. This system is called the **Sublime Eightfold Way**. The Sublime Eightfold Way (commonly translated as the Noble Eightfold Path) is laid down as follows:

1. Harmonious Perspective
2. Harmonious Aspiration
3. Harmonious Speech
4. Harmonious Action
5. Harmonious Lifestyle
6. Harmonious Practice
7. Harmonious Attention
8. Harmonious Equilibrium

This **Sublime Eightfold Way** is not a set of commandments or rules of living as some describe it. It is a description of the character structure of the true Buddhist. One has to acquire this character structure in order to become a Buddhist. A change in character is rarely a sudden change, though sometimes it could appear to be so. After a long period of struggling to understand, the harmonious perspective may dawn upon one when the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle suddenly click into place. When the harmonious perspective appears, the rest of the structure falls into place. The individual's life becomes reoriented and reorganized to reach the very special goal of inner calm called *Nibbana*.

[Internal and External Conflicts](#)

Internal and External Conflicts

Harmonious Perspective is the perspective that does not create any conflict within or without. Conflict within is the conflict between our **emotional impulses** (*asava*) and our sense of good and bad associated with **fear and shame** (*hiri-ottappa*). Conflict without is the conflict between our impulses and external reality, physical and social.

These emotional impulses are basically of two kinds: those that seek **pleasure** (*loba*) and those that avoid **pain** (*dosa*). These two kinds of emotional impulses represent the positive and the negative aspects of **pleasure seeking** (*kama-sukhallikanu-yoga*). These emotional impulses are also blind and they make us blind to **reality** (*moha*). These three drive us toward the goal of pleasure and seek immediate satisfaction.

If one's pleasure-seeking emotions are powerful, one might become a criminal. If, on the other hand, one's fear and shame become powerful one tends to become inhibited and deny oneself pleasure through an **ascetic lifestyle** (*atta-kilamatanu-yoga*). If one cannot resolve the conflict one way or the other, one might become neurotic or psychotic, running away from reality into a fantasy world.

The outer conflict occurs when the search for pleasure comes in conflict with other people or the physical environment itself. We cannot always have pleasure and we cannot always avoid pain. Sometimes our enjoyment of pleasure can hurt other people. Often things don't happen as we want. Our impulses are blind and our reason comes in conflict with our impulses. The conflict between the impulses and the external environment creates frustration, anxiety, and unhappiness.

The search for pleasure also results in possessiveness or **personalization**; we like to own our pleasures and make them permanent. By owning or personalizing, we build and expand a 'self' and 'personality' or 'ego'. This **personalization** is also accompanied by a desire for the permanent existence of what we call 'ourselves' or our 'own.' We like what we personalize not to grow old or die. Youthfulness is pleasant to us, while old age is unpleasant. Health is pleasant to us, while disease is unpleasant. Life is pleasant to us, while death is unpleasant. Parting from the pleasant and meeting the unpleasant is frustrating. Not being able to have things as we want is a frustration. The cause of this suffering is undoubtedly unrealistic desire or emotional impulses which lead to **personalization**.

It is clear that blind impulse is the culprit. It is this blind impulse that clashes with our sense of goodness and with our reason and external reality. It is only by gaining control over this impulse that this conflict can be resolved. Some method had to be found to gain control over this impulse without creating suffering in the process.

[The Value of Calmness](#)

The Value of Calmness

This all important method was discovered by the Buddha twenty-five centuries ago. This method is to unify the personality by reorganizing it to reach a harmonious goal that does not come in conflict with reality. This is to seek the new and special goal - the goal of **inner calm** (*ajjhata santi*). To achieve inner calm, one has to realize that calmness is goodness, happiness, and realism.

It should be noted that emotional excitement, which is accompanied by tension, is not a state of comfort or pleasure. It is only the release of tension, or the state of relaxation, that is pleasant. Satisfying desire is pleasant only because of the release of tension. The presence of desire, on the other hand, is unpleasant because it is accompanied by tension. It is to get rid of this discomfort of tension, and to obtain the comfort of relaxation that we seek satisfaction of desires. By reaching inner calm and relaxation, the goal of experiencing pleasure and happiness is attained without first experiencing tension.

Calm is also the way to goodness. The emotional impulse which comes in conflict with society and good principles is evil. The calming of these impulses is, therefore, goodness. This means that the aim of our sense of goodness is also achieved by seeking calm. Because the emotional impulse comes in conflict with reality, it follows that calmness gets us into harmony with reality. The aim of our rational thinking is to be in harmony with reality. Harmony with external reality, as well as the harmony with our reason, is achieved through the cultivation of inner calm.

This way, the whole personality is brought into harmony internally and externally by seeking calm. Understanding the problem of life and existence and the importance of seeking calm, is gaining harmonious perspective. When this special perspective is gained, the right sense of values is acquired. This gives a new direction to life. Then our life is reorganized to achieve a different goal. This way a personality transformation takes place; the character of the individual is changed; and mental health and happiness is achieved.

The aim of Buddhism is to transform the personality in this way. This transformation is also a process of growth. This is why Buddhism is also a growth technique. The growth takes place in four stages: **devotion** (*saddha*), **discipline** (*sila*), **detachment** (*caga*), and **depersonalization** (*panna*). When we speak of the practice of Buddhism, it is necessary to speak about these stages of growth. Each individual practices at his or her own level.

When one has acquired harmonious perspective, one has *saddha*. *Saddha* represents our sense of values. It is the appreciation of calm, which is goodness, happiness, and realism.

To appreciate is to value, to esteem, to hold in high regard or consider to be superior. When one appreciates calm, one appreciates the **Buddha**, the **Awakened One**; the *Dhamma*, the **Experience of the Awakened One**, and the **Sangha**, the **Society of followers of the Awakened One**. This triad (the **Buddha**, *Dhamma*, and *Sangha*) is called the “**Triple Gem**” (*ratanattaya*), because a “gem” represents value. Buddhists consider this triad to be the greatest thing in the world. They also call it the “**Triple Refuge**” (*tisarana*) because it is the refuge of the Buddhist in this world of suffering.

[Buddhist Devotional Practices](#)

Buddhist Devotional Practices

Devotional practices In Buddhism are exercises that develop **appreciation** (*saddha*). Buddhists do not pray to the Buddha but worship the Buddha. Prayer is adoration, confession, supplication or thanks-giving. To **worship** (worth + ship), on the other hand, is to **show great respect, reverence, or admiration**; it is to highly esteem or hold in high regard. For Buddhists, it is to **recognize the greatness or superiority of the Buddha**. This worship is a psychological exercise to develop *saddha* (appreciation), the Buddhist **sense of value** that gives new direction to life.

Buddhist worship is not, as some people may think, a meaningless ritual practiced by less-intellectual individuals. It can become so, however, if it is done without understanding. The purpose of Buddhist worship is to get one moving in the right direction. It is a reorientation. It is a kind of meditation or a psychological exercise. The idea is that we move in the direction of what we consider superior and worthwhile. Worship reminds us of the Buddhist sense of values -- we become what we worship.

Buddhist worship consists of bows, offerings, recitations, silent meditations, sharing of merit, and aspiration, each of which has a very important psychological meaning and purpose.

The bow, or obeisance, is an important practice which starts the initiate in the right direction. It is the recognition of the greatness of the Buddha and the admission of one's own inadequacy in comparison to the Buddha. It is saying, in effect, "Great lord, I recognize your greatness in comparison to me." This is humbling oneself before the Buddha. It makes the individual aware of his or her position on the ladder of progress. The bow, or prostration, is a conscious admission of one's inferiority to the superior position of the Buddha. It cultivates a healthy humble feeling, quite different from a morbid inferiority complex.

This recognition of one's inadequacy spurs one towards a superior state. Buddhists do not look upon themselves as sinners and helpless weaklings before a superior, all powerful, supernatural being who can never be equalled by anyone. They believe that everyone can reach the state of perfection reached by the Buddha. This exercise of bowing is only a method of programming our mind to reach the goal of perfection. It reminds us of our goal and the need to pursue it. It helps us to visualize the goal with respect and appreciation. Modern psycho-cybernetic theory, which compares the human mind to an automatic goal-seeking machine, is a very precise description of how Buddhist practice works. Buddhist worship is a kind of hero worship. If we worship those we consider to be heroes, we gradually become like them; if we worship (respect and admire) criminals, we become criminals ourselves; if we worship saints, on the other hand, we tend to become saints. The basic principle is that we become what we worship. We become the ideal we worship. Buddhists are not idol worshipers, but are ideal worshipers.

The bow is the physical expression of *saddha*, the mental state of reverential appreciation of the Buddha. It was William James who said, "Action seems to follow feeling, but really action and feeling go together; and by regulating the action, which is under the more direct control of the will, we can indirectly regulate the feeling, which is not." If we understand this psychological principle, we understand how the bow can help cultivate *saddha* within us. By acting out *saddha* in the bow, we produce the feeling of *saddha* within us. This *saddha* is what initiates the movement towards our goal.

All other parts of the worship, such as offerings, recitations and meditation, help cultivate *saddha*: The offering of light, which symbolizes wisdom, is a way of honouring the enlightenment of the Buddha. The offering of incense, which symbolizes virtue, is to honour the Buddha's virtues. Flowers represent the pleasures of the world, which are transient, their offering represents the sacrifice of worldliness in favour of the inner peace of *Nibbana*.

Offering food symbolizes our gratitude to the Buddha for giving us his teachings, even though what we give is not worth even a thousandth part of what Buddha gave to us.

When our lives have been reoriented through the cultivation of *saddha* or the reverential appreciation of the goal of perfection of human nature, our speech, action and lifestyle fall in line with this goal and our life begins to move in the direction of this goal. When this happens, we have become Buddhists. Now we see, how important it is to cultivate *saddha*.

[The Use of Images](#) **The Use of Images**

To place the use of images in Buddhist worship in its proper perspective, we must recognize that people use images in their lives all the time, sometimes to their disadvantage, but often to their great advantage. Even those who think they can do without images cannot help being influenced by them.

It is quite natural for human beings of all cultures to use images of various types. Why are great national monuments and statues built? Why do people pay thousands of dollars for paintings and sculpture? Why do people buy cameras? If images were not of any value, would the camera industry be so prosperous today? The Chinese say, "One picture is worth ten thousand words." Modern advertisers know this principle very well and use it to their advantage. Buddhists use Buddhist images to their advantage as well.

Buddhists are not naive enough to think that statues have life in them. They only use them as symbols. They use the image of the Buddha only as an external representation of an internal mental image. The external image enhances the internal mental image and the feeling associated with it. Statues are a kind of non-verbal language, like music, used to express certain ideas. It might be worthwhile to remember that we use verbal symbols all the time when we are speaking, writing, or even thinking.

[Harmonious Behaviour](#) **Harmonious Behaviour**

When one becomes a Buddhist, one's change in speech, action, and lifestyle is called *sila*. *Sila* is not merely self-restraint or discipline. No discipline is needed once our direction in life has been changed. We then go in that direction because we want to go. Discipline and restraint would be needed to stop us from going in that direction or to change our habits of behaviour. Even this would not be successful unless we changed our direction again.

A behaviour change imposed upon one by an external agency is called *silabbata-paramasa* in Buddhism. This Pali term is commonly mis-translated as "rites and rituals." However, *sila* means "behaviour"; *bata* means "vow"; and *paramasa* means "taking as something external" (*parato arnasati*). So *silabbata-paramasa* should really be translated as "behaviour that is imposed upon one", not as "rites and rituals." If we consider the new behaviour to be something imposed on us from outside, and not something that is the natural result of our changed outlook, it would be *silabbata-paramasa*. Some examples of this would be: trying to stop smoking because circumstances force us to do so, or because the doctor said it must be done; trying to follow commandments or precepts for fear of punishment by a wrathful God, or because Buddha said to do so; or not drinking alcohol because the government has issued a law of prohibition against it. This externally imposed behaviour change is not the goal of Buddhists.

A Buddhist believes that all beings are basically good. "The mind, oh disciples, is naturally pure. It becomes defiled due to foreign impurities." An enlightened Buddhist would never consider himself a "sinner," thus producing a bad self-image, which would prevent him from seeking purity. He would, rather, picture himself as an inherently good and calm person who could sometimes temporarily lose his equilibrium.

Good behaviour is something positive; it is not merely refraining from bad behaviour. It means becoming interested in others. It is the ability to consider others to be as important as oneself. It is being able to share things with others and care for others. It is treating others as a mother would treat her beloved children. It is including others in one's interest, without excluding any individual because he or she is "bad." It is being able to forgive other's faults. It is being able to treat everyone equally. Good behaviour, in Buddhism, is based on a good state of mind. Therefore it is necessary to cultivate a good mind, which is a calm mind. This is how meditation comes into Buddhism. Meditation becomes a natural thing when your mind is oriented towards the goal of calmness. Calmness is not opposed to interest in others. It is the calm mind that can become interested in others. The mind that is not calm is self-absorbed and not able to become interested in others. Selfless love is not emotional excitement, as some people think it is. All emotions are self-centred. Selflessness cannot therefore be an emotion. It can only be seen as the state of calm. This is why the cultivation of calm in meditation cannot make a person apathetic. Calmness can only result in empathy, the ability to enter into another person's feelings as if they were one's own. This is what makes a person good.

Calmness is not only selfless concern for others, it is also detachment. Attachment is self-centered, and is an emotion. This attachment is what many people call love. This kind of love disappears in calmness, but this is not something to be worried about. Attachment is, actually, what prevents selfless love. If we become attached to a person or thing, we tend to be protective and possessive, and thus become antagonistic towards others. Therefore, detachment and selflessness go together. In order to develop selfless love, we have to give up selfishness and attachment. This is the meaning of renunciation in Buddhism.

Renunciation and selfless concern for others brings about happiness. Unhappiness is due to a concern with oneself and one's needs. By giving up self-concerns, one becomes happy. This calmness and stability of mind is what is called *samadhi* (equilibrium).

[Depersonalization](#)

Depersonalization

The final stage in the development of the path of Buddhism is depersonalization. This is when we are able to give up what has been personalized by seeing that there is nothing that we can call our own. When we see that all things are **unstable** (*anicca*), **anxiety-producing** (*dukkha*), and **impersonal** (*anatta*), we are free of all suffering. This is because there are no possessions or "self" to worry about. This **depersonalization** is what makes an individual completely **selfless**. When this happens one can even face death without anxiety. **This complete freedom from anxiety is the aim of Buddhism.**

What is Meditation

Introduction

Buddhist meditation, as we teach it, is not a mystical practice; we are not teaching people to become mystics. This technique of meditation is for people who are living a secular life as householders, workers, having responsibilities, and who are involved in various relationships. What such people need is freedom from stress. They need peace of mind, healthy relationships, self-confidence, success in life, and efficiency at work. This means, learning to gain control over the emotions that prevent one from thinking rationally or acting intelligently. These problematic emotional excitements come in the form of anger, lust, worries, fears, and anxieties. The form of Buddhist meditation we teach helps one free the mind of emotional disturbances and help one to think clearly and act rationally.

[What One Can Gain](#)

What one can gain

This technique of meditation does not involve magical ceremonies like chanting mantras, exercises in concentration, or entering trance states. It involves effort to consciously purify the mind, calm the mind and relax the body. When the mind is purified, one experiences an inner happiness, a physical comfort, and a kindness and compassion that one has never experienced before. The happiness that we refer to is not a state of emotional excitement, but a tranquil state of the mind. The kindness and compassion we teach is not an attachment, but a state of selflessness. Emotional excitement is not true happiness, and attachment is not true love. Happiness and kindness are attributes of the pure and tranquil mind. Therefore this method of meditation is aimed at cultivating a relaxed body, and a pure and calm mind, resulting in the experience of selfless happiness and the genuine kindness of heart.

[Samatha and Vipassana](#)

Samatha and Vipassana

You may have heard of the two terms - *samatha* and *vipassana*. This type of meditation is based on the teachings of the Buddha. *Samatha* is the cultivation of tranquility of mind, and *vipassana* is the cultivation of intelligence. Most people when they speak of *samatha* meditation, they think it is practicing concentration, but true *samatha* is not concentration. Concentration only leads to the hypnotic state. *Samatha* is not the practice self-hypnosis. Properly understood, *samatha* means purifying and calming the mind.

[Hypnosis](#)

Hypnosis

Hypnosis is a term coined by Dr. Braid a Physician from England. His method of producing the hypnotic state was to get a person to concentrate. Concentration needs effort and effort means tension, which is the opposite of relaxation and calm. When one keeps concentrated sufficiently long, the mind and body reacts by entering a kind of sleep, which is different from the normal sleep, and that is the hypnotic sleep. It is half way between waking and sleeping. It is a very passive state, which could be explained as a regression to childhood, where the child lets the mother do what ever she likes to the child, like bathing and cleaning. It is entering an uncritical state of the mind, where one begins to receive uncritically any suggestion given by the hypnotist. Another person can implant ideas in one's mind, when under the hypnotic state, which will be accepted uncritically and carried out without question, even without one's knowledge. Faith and trust is a condition that prepares the mind to enter the hypnotic state. The hypnotic state is not a state of mental purity. One can be emotionally exited in the hypnotic state.

[Hypnotic Hallucination](#)

Hypnotic Hallucination

Some people are prone to enter the hypnotic state easily because they naturally remain in an uncritical state most of the time. They tend to believe anything they are told by an authority. Such people can be easily hypnotized. Sometimes a person might enter the hypnotic state easily when in a religious environment like a church, temple or synagogue. Once a person is in the hypnotic state, he/she can begin to hallucinate. Hallucinations can be in the form of seeing lights, seeing the Buddha, seeing God, or even experiencing out of body movements, and many other such experiences. What is seen or hallucinated depends on what the mind unconsciously expects. It is like dreaming. Someone from outside can suggest what is to be seen, while in the hypnotic state; or someone can suggest it before entering the hypnotic state. These suggestions are not only accepted, they are also carried out in the body and the mind. This is how hypnotic healing is done. The suggestions that lead to hallucinations are also accepted as truth. The hypnotic state can be produced by another person or it can be produced by oneself.

[Distinction between Hypnosis and Samadhi](#)

Distinction between Hypnosis and *Samadhi*

Therefore it is extremely important to distinguish between hypnosis and *samadhi*, and learn to avoid entering the hypnotic state, before we begin meditation. This is the meaning of the well known Zen saying, "If you see the Buddha on the way, kill him." "Buddha," there, is the hallucination. "Kill," there means, destroy it. There is nothing bad about hypnosis, unless it is used for bad purposes. Sometimes it can even be used for medical purposes like healing some sicknesses. In ancient times, hypnosis was used by doctors to anesthetize patients before operation. Some use it in psychotherapy. Yet true Buddhist meditation is not hypnosis. *Samadhi* is not concentration or self hypnosis.

[Vipassana](#)

Vipassana

The term *Vipassana* is commonly translated as "insight," but this term is also frequently misunderstood because it is commonly translated as "insight." *Vipassana* is often confused with intuition because of this. The term *vipassana* is also often confused with the psychological meaning of the term "insight." In psychology, insight is understood as a sudden understanding of the solution to a problem. In psychotherapy it is understood as bringing to consciousness the unconscious motive of a conscious action. *Vipassana*, on the other hand, is the introspective awareness of the subjective experience. This subjective experience consists of one's reaction to environmental stimulation. This reaction can be broadly analyzed into four parts: sensory perception, thinking, feeling, and acting. *Vipassana*, therefore, is to see this experience in its parts, as an impersonal process of activity, without a "self" being involved. In other words, *vipassana* is "systematic introspection," resulting in the realization of the "impersonality" of all phenomena. Therefore *vipassana* can be translated as "in-sight," provided we know what it means; namely, "mental vision focused within." Yet the use of this word can be misleading because it is often used to mean seeing the inner essence of an object perceived, while *vipassana* is seeing the inner subjective experience of perception itself. *Vipassana* is an introspective method of removing the notion of "self" from the mind, in order to free the mind of selfishness.

[Selfishness](#)

Selfishness

Selfishness is due to self-centered emotions. These self-centered emotions also influence the thinking process to form the concept of "self." It is true that, biologically speaking, self-centered emotions that support self-preservation is necessary for

the survival of animals, but the human being is the only animal that is aware of a "self" that can be attacked by a discourteous word or insult. That "self" is not a physical entity but an imaginary "psychic" entity, which is responsible for all quarrels, wars, and crimes in the world. This psychic "self" can be seen not only as something within the body, it can be expanded in our minds to include all the members of one's family and possessions, one's race, one's nation, or all humanity or even the whole planet earth. This is how the idea of self preservation of the human being can lead to wars between nations and even between planets. These pestilences, the wars and inhuman crimes of human society can be eliminated only by eliminating this imaginary notion of "self," and the self-centered emotions that go with it. There are three basic tendencies that must be eliminated: the emotion, the notion of self, and the unconsciousness that maintains it. By eliminating these three conditions, the human being rises to a higher level of experience, which can be called "divine" (*brahma*). This is the final aim of the teachings of the Buddha. The practice leading to the elimination of the self-centered emotions is *samatha*, and that leading to the elimination of the notion of "self" is *vipassana*. Both are eliminated by eliminating unconsciousness. This rising to a higher level of experience is called Transcendence of the ordinary human level of experience.

[Transcendence](#)

Transcendence

Very often people refer to meditation as sitting. It needs to be emphasized here that, meditation is not the practice of a ritual of just sitting. Meditation can be done while walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. Meditation is a mental process, not a physical one. The aim of meditation is to return to the natural state of calmness that we lost, when we started reacting to environmental stimulation. Normally our mind is disturbed because we constantly react to environmental stimulation of our senses. Meditation has to be seen as an effort to stop this and be calm and relaxed, by not making any effort. It is an effort to transcend this animalistic weakness of reacting to stimulation. This is why we like to call Buddhist meditation a growth technique, rather than the mere obedience to rules of conduct or the practice of rituals of sitting or walking, though these postures of the body can be profitably used in meditation. The aim of Buddhist meditation is to raise the human consciousness to a higher level beyond the normal experience. This transcendence is achieved by following the " Sublime Eight-fold Way" (*ariya atthangika magga*), commonly translated as the "Noble Eight-fold Path."

[Growth and Maturity](#)

Growth and Maturity

The term "*ariya*" is commonly translated as "noble." The Buddha, however, used the term "*ariya*" to refer to something more than noble. What he meant was a higher evolutionary level of consciousness which could be developed through a proper technique. It is a level beyond the normal. Therefore it is more meaningful to translate it as "super-normal," or better "Sublime," rather than "noble." Just as the aim of modern psychotherapy is to raise an "abnormal" person to a "normal" level of living, the aim of the Buddha was to bring the "normal" person to a "super-normal" level. It is very important to understand this distinction between "noble" and "supernormal" or "sublime." This supernormal level is a higher level of emotional and intellectual maturity. The purpose of Buddhist meditation is to grow to a higher level of emotional and intellectual maturity, beyond the normal, and to experience a degree of happiness and kindness beyond the normal. Buddhist meditation is a method of gaining emotional and intellectual maturity through the purification of mind. *Samatha* meditation is to gain emotional maturity, and *vipassana* meditation is to gain intellectual maturity.

[Natural and Human Technique](#)

Natural and Human Technique

This process of growth takes place according to a natural law, by following a natural human technique. It does not happen due to any supernatural power. We are not depending on any external aid, not even that of a teacher or guru. This practice is based on self-reliance. It has to be done by ourselves. This is a "do-it-yourself" technique. A teacher can only show the way. The student does the practice.

[Will Power](#)**Will power**

In a sense, meditation can be seen as the development of will-power, to control one's irrational emotions. Some cultures believe in a free-will that we are born with, which means that we have will-power naturally. But we know by experience that when emotion and will are in conflict, emotion wins most of the time. This means that will-power is not a power we are born with. It is only a human "potential" that has to be actualized through practice. We are not born with a fully developed will-power; it is only a potential. Biologically speaking, the human being, as a higher animal, has a more evolved brain, especially the fore-brain (the cerebrum). The difference between the human being and all the other animals is that all other animals are passively reacting to their environment. The human being has the potential to delay the reaction, to get sufficient time to think and decide which response to make in a given situation, and respond rationally instead of emotionally. It is this ability to choose the response that is called will-power. Yet every human being is not able to use this ability all the time.

[Free Will and Determinism](#)**Free will and determinism**

This freedom to choose is also called "free-will." Do we really have this ability to make a choice and to act rationally always? Unfortunately, this ability to choose is not a capacity that is fully developed in the normal human being. This is why we make so many stupid mistakes in life, about which we repent later. Often we want to do something in the right way, but we find ourselves doing just the opposite. This is because our will-power has not been fully developed. Buddhist meditation, when properly practiced, is the way to develop our will-power, or free will. This ability is not usable until it is developed. Strictly speaking, it is not even a power but a capacity that is dependent on the necessary conditions. In other words, it is based on the principle of determinism. The debate about free-will and determinism has been going on for a long time. Yet these two ideas are not in conflict; free-will is deterministic. It is only by recognizing this fact that it becomes possible to develop this capacity to choose, using a proper technique based on the principle of determinism.

[Organism and Environment](#)**Organism and Environment**

In order to understand this fully, it is necessary to go into the physiology of emotional behavior. We are organisms born with senses: the eyes, the ears, nose, tongue, and the body. When the senses are stimulated, a reaction occurs in the organism as a whole. For example, when light falls upon the eye, sight occurs, and this is a reaction. This sight is only seeing a meaningless field of different intensities and varieties of color. Our next step is to make meaning out of what we see. This is done by the intellect, and in doing so, we construct objects and their relationships. Once an object has been constructed, it is interpreted as pleasant unpleasant or neutral. This interpretation is followed by an emotional reaction to what is seen, in the form of a desire, hatred, or fear. This emotional reaction is but a disturbance in the body, created by a hormone that is secreted into the blood that carries the hormone to all parts of the body, causing changes in the activity of different organs in the body. Every emotion is accompanied by muscular tension, among other changes in the body. This tension is experienced as discomfort, which compels an individual to seek the release of tension in action, to obtain what is desired, to get rid of what is hated, or to run away from what is feared. This is the completion of the reaction.

[Reaction and Response](#)**Reaction and Response**

This reaction has three main stages: the cognitive, affective, and active. The cognitive is just the mental creation of the object and the interpretation. The affective is the emotional reaction or excitement that results. The release of tension in action is the behavioral part of the reaction. Normally, all animals below the human level are passively reacting to their environment in this way. The human being has the latent ability to delay the release of tension in action, to get sufficient time to decide which response to make in a given situation. By thinking rationally, the human being is potentially able to decide upon the right response, and make the proper response by acting rationally. This is what we call will-power.

[Evolution](#)

Evolution

This is what one learns from our lessons at the center and during our retreats. It is learning how to act rationally instead of emotionally. One will be provided with the tools to work on oneself. Working on oneself is one's own job, not the teacher's. The teacher's job is only to show the tools that you already have but do not know that you have them. The teacher also can tell you how to use them. Our hope is that you will be able to work on yourself and grow, evolve, and be transformed. The degree of transformation, and quality of life experienced is the measure of your progress. What we look for is growth and transformation, not mere insight as a view. This is why we do not call this method of meditation "insight meditation." We also do not expect visions or hallucinations of any kind. If what you gain from a retreat is only more will-power, and a sense of peace of mind, then you have won a degree of success.

[Sublime Eightfold Way](#)

Sublime Eightfold Way

It is very important to understand that this technique of meditation is a method of transforming oneself from a self-centered personality into a selfless one, by following the Sublime Eight-fold Way. There are eight steps to be followed. They are as follows:

1. Harmonious Perspective
2. Harmonious goal orientation
3. Harmonious speech
4. Harmonious action
5. Harmonious lifestyle
6. Harmonious Exercise
7. Harmonious attentiveness
8. Harmonious equilibrium

[Harmonious Perspective](#)

Harmonious Perspective

The first step is to acquire the harmonious perspective. The harmonious perspective is the perspective that brings about harmony internally and externally. This is a perspective, not merely a right view or right understanding. This is a different way of looking at life, yourself, the world, and your relationship to the world. It is seeing things in a different way, which does not create conflict internally or externally.

[Conflict with Reality](#)

Conflict with Reality

The first thing we must do is to understand that our emotions come in conflict with the reality of change and separation in the world. Our emotions seek pleasure and avoid pain. This means, they are seeking permanent pleasure. This is not possible because pleasure is impermanent and pain cannot be avoided altogether. Emotions are also possessive and self-centered. We do not really possess anything in the world because all relationships are impermanent. Our self-centeredness

is futile because we can never really preserve a permanent identity or self, because we change constantly, both physically and mentally and we cannot avoid death. This pursuit of eternal pleasure and eternal life is based on blind emotions, and not through clear thinking. It is important to understand that our emotions come in conflict with reality, and it is unwise to be carried away by them. It is wiser to be dominated by reason than by emotion.

Unrealistic Pursuits

Unrealistic Pursuits

Let us consider a person who is attracted to money or wealth. He may think that becoming wealthy is the greatest thing in the world. So he begins to earn wealth. When he makes a loss he becomes terribly unhappy. Another might think that social position or power is greater than wealth. He might sacrifice wealth to gain social position and power. When he loses his position and power, he comes to great discomfort as a result. Still another might believe that popularity or good name is better than riches or even social position and power. The latter might sacrifice wealth and high social position to become popular and to secure a good name. Such a person might be blamed and lose the good name some way or other, and as a result suffer much pain of mind. Another person might think, "What is the use of wealth?" "What is the use of social recognition or power?" "What is the use of popularity and a good name?", "What I need is sensual pleasure and keep on enjoying sensual pleasure, thinking that is the greatest thing!" That person too will be thoroughly disappointed when he/she ceases to get the pleasures he/she craves for. Different people have different ideas of what is good or great or superior.

Sense of Values

Sense of Values

According to each person's sense of values, each person will feel inferior, superior or equal. If we think that wealth is superior, then the moment we meet a wealthier person, we may begin to compare ourselves to them and feel inferior. Or if a person thinks that high social position is superior, they may feel inferior in the presence of any person who is greater in social position. Likewise, if a person thinks that popularity is the greatest thing, that person begins to feel inferior upon meeting a person who is more popular than himself or herself. If a person thinks that enjoying sensual pleasure is the greatest thing, then that person will feel inferior in the presence of some one that is enjoying more sensual pleasures. This is how people feel inferior or superior

True Happiness

True Happiness

This unhealthy or worldly sense of values was shown by the Buddha to be something that only brings unhappiness, disappointment, frustration, sorrow, pain, anxieties, and worries. The Buddha pointed out that happiness is to be sought not outside in wealth, status, popularity or sensual pleasures; but rather, inside, through purity of mind. This happiness within is inner peace, calm or tranquility of mind. If one can understand that inner peace is the greatest thing in the world, then one will be feeling inferior only when meeting a calm person. This feeling is rather an admiration and appreciation rather than a feeling of inferiority. Meeting such a calm person becomes an inspiration for us to pursue the goal of calmness ourselves. And if we are really convinced that calmness is the greatest thing, we don't need tranquilizers because tranquilizers are needed only when you are not convinced that calmness is the greatest thing. If calmness is appreciated we automatically begin to pursue this goal and as a result we begin to think, speak, act, and live calmly. Our whole life becomes calm automatically.

Harmonious Goal

Harmonious Goal

It is only when your goal is becoming rich, and you need calmness only to reach that goal, that you need to take a tranquilizer pill. This is because tranquility is not your goal; it is only a means to your goal. Your mind is not tranquil because you are seeking a different goal. It is our sense of values that makes us calm or not calm. You are already familiar with the word "Nirvana," which is regarded as the ultimate goal of the Buddhist. Some think that Nirvana is a kind of Heaven, but Nirvana simply means the Imperturbable Serenity of mind. (nir is the negative prefix like the English "non," and vana means shaking). "Nirvana" is the mind that is not shaken by anything in the world, not even in the face of death. It is the "Unshaken Mind." It is a tranquility of mind which can never be disturbed. That is what "Nirvana" is. All varieties of Buddhist meditation, whether we call it samatha or vipassana, has "Nirvana" as the ultimate goal. This means, if we think that tranquility is the greatest thing in the world, we become Buddhists automatically, as a result. If we think that calmness is not the greatest thing in the world, then we are not Buddhists after all, because we will not be trying to achieve Nirvana. This means, one becomes a Buddhist not by birth or baptism, but by one's sense of values.

Change of Perspective

Change of Perspective

Our change of perspective results in our understanding of the true values of life. This change in our sense of values results in a new goal orientation. When our goal in life changes to tranquility of mind, our thoughts, speech, and actions will fall in line directed towards this goal. You don't have to push yourself to meditate. Meditation will automatically occur in you because meditation is the means to the goal you are pursuing. Your life is going in that direction. You don't have to make any effort. You don't have to make any resolution. You don't need to have will-power to meditate. Willpower is the result of meditation, and not a means to it. You don't have to force yourself to meditate. You don't have to say, "I don't have any time, I have to make time." You will automatically have time because that is what you want to do. If you really want to do something you will have time. You don't have time only when you are not really interested in doing something.

Autonomy

Autonomy

Therefore meditation is automatic to the person who has the Harmonious Perspective, because with the Harmonious Perspective (*samma-ditthi*) arises the Harmonious Goal-orientation (*samma-sankappa*), which automatically leads to Harmonious Speech (*samma-vaca*), Action (*samma-kammanta*), and Lifestyle (*samma-ajiva*). From there on, one makes the effort to purify the mind automatically. This is the Harmonious Practice (*samma-vayama*). This results in the introversion of attention (*satipatthana*). This is the Harmonious Attention (*samma-sati*). This is the beginning of the Sevenfold Process of Awakening (*satta bhogganga*). This introversion of attention leads to seeing what is within (*dhamma vicaya*), which is one's experience within, which is the reaction of the organism to environmental stimulation. When this is achieved, the will power (*viriya*) is developed, and one's mind becomes purified. This makes the mind experience the happiness of selflessness (*piti*). This leads to relaxation of the body (*passaddhi*) and the feeling of comfort that goes with it. This results in tranquility of mind (*samadhi*). This tranquility helps healthy objective introspection (*upekkha*), resulting in true "in-sight (*pañña*)," which is "experiencing experience" and "Awakening" (*sambodhi*) from the "dream of existence" (*bhava nirodha*). This is the freedom from all self-centered emotions (*vimutti*) and sufferings of life (*dukkha nirodha*). This is the "Imperturbable Serenity" (*NIRVANA*).

Awakening

Awakening

To understand more fully the meaning of "awakening from the dream of existence," through "experiencing experience," we need to go into an examination of the deeper meaning of the term *vipassana*. Experience is normally seen as the interaction between a "subject" (the self) and an "object" (in the world outside). The Buddha taught that the experience of "existence," of a subject and an object, is a "delusion." This means "experience precedes existence" (*mano pubbangama dhamma*); that is, "existence" is only an "experience." Experience is the basis of existence. Experience is the ground on which existence stands.

[What is Existence](#)**What is existence**

Normally, we experience the "existence" of a subject (conceived as oneself) and an object (conceived as individuals and things of the world). We (the self) also tend to become emotionally involved with (things of the world). We get involved by forming relationships between the subject (self) and objects (of the world). Because we get involved with the existence of oneself, others, and the relationship, we tend to forget that this existence is only an "experience." We tend to take the "existence" to be very real. This is why the separation from our loved ones makes us so unhappy. This is why the death of a relative or friend results in immense grief and lamentation. When, however, we begin to become aware of the "experience," which is the basis of existence, through *vipassana* meditation, the "existence" is found to be less real. Ultimately we realize that this "existence" is only an illusion (a perceptual fallacy) or more correctly a delusion (a conceptual fallacy). This is the "awakening" (*sambodhi*) from the "dream of existence." This is also called the "cessation of existence," which is Nirvana (*bhava nirodho nibbanam*).

[Lay Person's Meditation](#)**Lay Person's Meditation**

Of course the purpose of our meditation is not to reach that high ideal, which is *Nirvana*. This level of "Awakening from the dream of existence" is a high level of meditation, which is for yogis who have given up the worldly secular life altogether. This is for yogis who have realized the futility and the suffering involved with the secular life. These yogis see that secular life is painful (*dukkha*) because it is mainly based on emotional involvement with objects.

[Yogi's Meditation](#)**Yogi's Meditation**

This point of view of the yogis, however, is not difficult to understand today, because we know that every emotion is self-centered and is accompanied by muscular tension, which is uncomfortable until it is released in action, to get what we want, to get rid of what we hate, or to run away from what we fear. It is this temporary release of tension that is so pleasurable, which keeps us enthralled and enslaved to it. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to release this tension, because we cannot always get what we want, or get rid of what we hate, or run away from what we fear. This unreleased tension gets accumulated and can lead even to a nervous breakdown. This problem is what is called "stress" today. Therefore the aim of the yogi is to get rid of these self-centered emotions and self-centered thinking. Physical relaxation alone does not solve the problem, though, however, it can be a temporary symptomatic treatment.

[Emancipation from Emotion](#)**Emancipation from emotion**

This was why the Buddha showed the way to freedom from this slavery to emotions and suffering. The radical solution of the Buddha was to awaken from the dream of existence and relationship, by learning to focus attention on the experience (*dhamma*) instead of existence (*bhava*). This is a paradigm shift resulting in the experience of impersonal experience, and freedom from the experience of existence. It is the ultimate stage in the evolution of human consciousness. It is *NIRVANA* (*bhava nirodho nibbanam*), the sumum bonum of the Buddhist practice.

[Vipassana is high level](#)**Vipassana is high level**

Vipassana, therefore, is the cultivation of the awareness of experience, instead of the awareness of existence. This definition of *vipassana* might be confusing at the beginning, but it will become clearer as one advances in the practice of

proper *vipassana*. The first step in meditation is to learn to purify the mind, which is the practice of tranquility (*samatha*) meditation. Without cultivating tranquility (*samatha*), it is not possible to practice in-sight (*vipassana*).

Vipassana Not Suited to Lay Person

Vipassana not suited to lay person

This is why *Vipassana* meditation, being a high level of practice, is not applicable in the secular life, which is concerned with self-preservation, propagation of the species, and gratification of the senses. The only kind of meditation suited to secular life is *samatha* or tranquility meditation. It is only when a person is interested in going the whole way, which leads to the awakening from the dream of existence that a person should take up the practice of *vipassana*. This reminds us of what Jesus said: "If you want to go the whole way, sell all your things, give to the poor, and come with me;" and again, "Even if a camel could creep through the eye of a needle, a rich man cannot enter the kingdom of God." It is only when a person is willing to give up everything that *vipassana* proper can be practiced.

Look Before You Leap

Look before you leap

It is important to know what we are doing, before set about doing it. This is why our method of meditation begins with Right Understanding

